



Bright by i am cloud

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Summary: Is it possible for someone to control their fate, or is it in the hands of the universe? In this story of friendship and love, the Losers must ask themselves what it means to face one's fears. Is the price worth paying, or is it something better off being. . . forgotten?
[Eighth Loser Fic] [Contains OCs.]

1. Prologue

So. . . I've been in a huge writing mood lately. Considering that I've had major writer's block over the past couple of years, I find this to be awesome. Hopefully it won't come back with a vengeance any time soon.

Not long after *Chapter One* was released, I began writing an *IT* fic. Sadly, I never made it past the first chapter. I thought that it was yet another story that wasn't meant to be. But then I came across *Floating on Air*. I fell in love with it and soon found the motivation to pick up where I left off. I'm tired of thinking and not doing. So, here is me doing! Will it be good? Bad? Average? I have no idea. The only thing I know is that I'm having a blast writing it.

The fic will contain an OC named Kimmy Hanscom. She's Ben's older sister by two years. She'll be introduced in the next chapter. This chapter, which will serve as the prologue, will focus on IT, the Turtle, and the Other.

I wanted to incorporate the novel and miniseries into my story, something that *Floating on Air* has done, as well. (Side Note: go read Winchestergirl123's *IT* fic. Seriously. It's amazing.) I also plan to add some twists and turns that are not seen in the 2017 film.

Seeing as this is a horror film, the rating will be M.

So far, the warnings include: abuse, death, strong language, violence, and gore. More will be added latter on, which will happen around *Chapter Two*. That being said, the prologue includes the death of a young child. Please read with caution.

I'll be taking some creative liberties throughout the fic, which can be seen a little bit in this chapter. If that's not something you are into, that's alright. If it is, I hope you enjoy what I have for this fandom :)

Before we begin, I want to thank two wonderful people: my

mom and Winchestergirl123. They are the ones who helped make this story possible.

My mom helped me polish the prologue, which I greatly appreciate. Though it made me anxious to have her read my fic, I am thankful to have someone as lovely as her. (Thank you, Mama, for being honest with me.) To Winchestergirl123: I want to thank you for giving me your input and for pointing my story in the right direction. Your advice and encouragement gave me the push I needed to dive back in to the world of writing. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Disclaimer: I am not Stephen King. Thus, I do not own *IT* in any way, shape, or form.

IT awoke to the perfect alarm: the sound of anguished cries.

For twenty-seven years, *IT* had slept within the rancid sewers of Derry, Maine. It was the ultimate dwellings for something that thrived off of fear and immense pain. *IT*'s mouth drooled from starvation, which dripped onto damp cement. Wanting to know where the delectable noise had come from, *IT*'s mind began to focus on its source.

From *IT*'s nest, *IT* could hear the cries of a boy. The rush of terror that the child possessed hit *IT* full force, making *IT* giggle with glee.

Tasty, tasty fear!

IT could sense the piercing sensation that radiated off of the boy's body. An overheated space heater, ready to catch fire. With each hit he took from his stepfather's unforgiving hammer, he begged for mercy. "Stop it," he squeaked. "Stop it, Daddy. I'm sorry. I love you."

Not long after he gave this desperate plea, the boy began to greatly weaken. And then, with a final, shallow breath, his short life came to an end. *IT* imagined the blood that trickled from his head, a violent red laced with gore and the oh so sweet scent of horror. How *IT* longed to slurp it up, to feel its warmth beneath *IT*'s tongue. Even the image of the boy's stepfather shrieking at *IT*'s clown form made *IT*

shiver with delight.

Once he realized what he had done, a cry of shock came from the boy's stepfather. His fists trembled as his gaze focused on the pools of blood that crept across his kitchen floor. It was this glistening substance that had condemned him to hell itself. Had the stepfather been alone, *IT* would have most likely gone after him first. Though *IT* did eat adults, *IT* preferred the flesh of children. They believed in anything they laid their innocent sight upon. The younger *IT*'s victims were, the easier they were to frighten.

IT also discovered the sobs of another boy, one who wasn't much older than the child who had passed on. The guilt he felt for hiding in his room as his little brother suffered ate away at his heart beautifully.

"*I'm sorry, Dorey. I'm so, so sorry,*" he whispered, tears trickling down his ashen cheeks.

The hunger *IT* felt intensified, screaming at *IT* to begin *IT*'s killings. To take a bite of *IT*'s delicious treat known as *Eddie Corcoran*. *IT* decided that *IT* deserved a nice feast, one that reeked of juicy torment.

IT, knowing that *IT* had much work to do, shifted from *IT*'s true form into that of Pennywise the Dancing Clown. *IT* shook with familiarity as *IT*'s body finished morphing, relishing *IT*'s changed shape. *IT* chuckled, a sound that resemble haunting bells, as *IT* began to put *IT*'s plan into action.

Time to float.

From another part of the multiverse, Maturin watched as *IT* awoke. In the past, the Turtle had been restrained during *IT*'s year-long feedings. There had been little that the Turtle could have done, leaving the fate of *IT*'s victims in their own hands. Silence and solitude were how Maturin preferred to spend its existence. It preferred to remain within its shell, hidden away from those who would otherwise bother it.

And yet. . . .

"It seems our friend has finished their slumber," remarked the Other.

The Turtle, more than ready to return to its slumber, blinked in response. This wasn't the first time the lesser cosmic being had terrorized Derry. Nor was it the first time the survivors preferred to forget than remember. Maturin could not fault the humans for pretending as if nothing happened, to not want to face the truth. A creature that took their young and haunted their dreams was enough to drive any mortal mad.

"What woke *IT* this time?" asked the Turtle.

"The murder of a boy named Dorsey Corcoran. It would appear that the quick burial his stepfather did led to our friend's first meal."

IT did tend to hibernate until a catastrophic tragedy occurred. But there were also events of a lesser degree that were enough to pull *IT* from *IT*'s slumber. To say that the murder, one that had not been caused by the doing of *IT*, of Dorsey was gruesome enough to do just that. . . . Maturin closed its gaze in sympathy for the life that had been snuffed out. And for the lives that would soon follow Dorsey's lead. Many had perished to satiate *IT*'s hunger and cruel games. If only *IT* could exist without the need for the suffering of others. Then, maybe then, they wouldn't have to worry about *IT* upsetting the balance of the Macroverse.

"Perhaps we should keep a close watch on them."

"As we always have," the Turtle pointed out. "But can we damn *IT* for listening to *IT*'s instincts?"

Though the Turtle did not agree with *IT*'s killings, it did respect *IT* - only holding a higher regard for Gan. The three, though in possession of different levels of power, were one in the same. They were individual parts of a whole, greater presence.

It wasn't as if the Turtle wished to ignore the gory events that were soon to come. Maturin, after all, did vomit the universe that the humans inhabited. There was a fondness it held for its creation, for it

was the only place that the Other had little to no doing in bringing into existence.

Because of this, the Turtle did what it could to look after those who found misery during *IT*'s horrible reign.

"No. We cannot," agreed Gan. "But it is important that we make sure our friend is kept in check. The less lives *IT* takes, the better. Besides," - Gan paused, increasing the Turtle's interest - "I have a feeling that *IT*'s time is soon coming to a close."

The Turtle closed its eyes, focusing its sight upon what the Other had seen: children, eight of them, brought together during a lifechanging summer. Their lights, bright as the sun, forming into a powerful force. Their past, present, and future blurred into a singular - yet separate - moment. The gift they held inside of themselves, something that would surpass an infinity, filled its mind.

Such a wondrous talent.

But they were also young, tiptoeing the line between childhood and adulthood. They needed someone to guide them. To watch over them as they grew into the people they were destined to become.

"It would appear so," the Turtle hummed. "How great a burden they must carry."

"All must meet their fate, no matter how heavy it may be."

Maturin peeked at Gan. "So if they perish before their biggest battle. . ."

A heaviness settled upon the all-powerful beings, and the dread of what could come to pass flashed before their mind's eye.

"Our friend will win," - added the Other - "and will continue *IT*'s feedings until your universe comes to an end."

So. . . . That was the prologue. It was fun writing from the perspective of *IT* and the Turtle. I would like to write from the Other's perspective at some point, but I'm not quite sure if that's

a for sure thing.

If the Turtle or the Other seemed out of character, I apologize. I wanted to take a closer look at what happened behind the scenes. I should mention that I haven't read the *Dark Tower* series (which is where the Other/Gan is from), nor have I finished reading *IT* yet. Aside from the miniseries and film, my main source material is the *IT* wiki site. I'm hoping to have read all of *IT* before *Chapter Two* comes out, seeing as it would help make *Bright* more faithful to King's work.

For those who have not read the novel, Dorsey is a minor character in it. It's also where his plea is from. I did intentionally have Eddie call him Dorey, in case if any of you thought I accidentally misspelled his name.

(Side note: I wanted to incorporate The Film Theorists' theory on how the Losers Club all have the ability to Shine. If you would like to watch the video they made, it's titled "Film Theory: IT - Pennywise's Greatest Fear." I highly recommend it.)

I'll try to have the first chapter up as soon as possible.

2. Chapter 1

This took me ages to write, but I can finally say that I've finished the first chapter! It was so satisfying to actually mark this as complete. I've even begun writing the first draft of the second chapter(!).

We finally get to meet Kimmy Hanscom. Most of this chapter is seen from her perspective, since I wanted to focus on some of her back story and introduction. Don't worry. I plan to write from the perspective of other characters throughout the fic. (Which I'm super excited to do.)

Since we didn't meet Ben's family in the film, I thought it would be interesting to see what might have happened had they been in it. So, we will be seeing not only his mom, but also his aunt Jean and cousin Jim, too.

I should also note that I went back and edited the prologue. In my excitement to publish *Bright*, I accidentally over-looked some grammar and spelling mistakes (how the hell did I mix up 'it' and 'it's?'. . . I've brought shame to my school's English department). I also added a little more detail, so there's that, too.

For Kimmy's face-claim, the actress who looks closest to how I imagine her as a teen is Mackenzie Foy. I'm still debating which actress looks like adult Kimmy, though. Thankfully, I still have some time to decide.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Kimmy knew that she would always remember the last time she spoke to her dad; that the bittersweet memory would play before her, day and night, like a never-ending movie reel.

It had been the beginning of summer, only days after school was out for the season. At the time, her family was living in Houston. It was a hot place. The humidity was so heavy that it weighed down on

Kimmy's shoulders like a pair of hands pressing atop them. Aside from that, and the Evangelists who continuously told her that she needed to bask in the lord's grace, she loved living there. Up until the worst moment of Kimmy's life, it was the happiest her small family of four had been.

She and Ben, her little brother slash best buddy, had been promised a trip to the lake. Kimmy was eager to go, to spend time with just her dad and brother. It wasn't that she didn't want her mom to join in, but it had been ages since the three of them had done something together. There had also been the worry; worry about how tired her dad would be after finishing his shift at Smith & James Welding.

"*We'll go,*" he had told her, flashing her that lazy grin of his. "*I promise, Kims.*"

Kimmy had peered up at him sheepishly, the toast she'd made for breakfast forgotten. "*You won't be tired?*" she'd asked, concerned.

"*When I'm with the two of you, I'm never tired.*"

Her dad had been a cheesy man, unafraid of clichés. He wore them as if they were a badge of honor. This, of course, annoyed his wife - who happened to be a high school English teacher.

Kimmy had rolled her eyes in mock annoyance, a grin like his own making an appearance.

"*Don't give me that attitude,*" he'd chuckled before heading towards the front door.

Kimmy had been close behind him, the tail of her robe trailing behind her like a clingy duckling.

"*But you'll let us know if you're tired, right?*"

He'd playful ruffled her bedhead. "*I won't be.*"

"*Right?*"

Amusement twinkled in his sky-blue eyes. His boisterous crow's feet even made an appearance. "*Sure. I'll tell you.*"

Both knew that he wouldn't. He never did until he was about to fall face-first onto the ground.

He had kissed her forehead good-bye, told her to give his love to her mom and Ben, and then left for his eight-hour shift. She had crossed her arms over her chest to keep the pre-dawn air from prickling her skin. Kimmy stood on the porch as he pulled out of the driveway and wrinkled his nose like a disgruntled rabbit, the tip of his tongue peeking out from between his lips. He grinned when he'd noticed that she'd mimicked him.

And then he was gone.

It was twelve minutes before five that her heart dropped to the pit of her stomach. A feeling akin to frost spread across every inch of her body, forcing her to stop where she was. She'd dropped the painting cup she held. The filthy water splashed across her sock-covered feet as shards of glass twirled around her, shimmering in the dim lightening.

He's gone, she'd thought as tears pooled into the corners of her eyes.

She could never explain *how* she knew. She just did. As if it were as natural as breathing, or walking in a straight line.

Kimmy's mom felt concerned when she saw her cemented to the hallway floorboards. She watched as her daughter's breath hitched in panic as she struggled to find a way back down to Earth.

"Honey, what's wrong?"

Kimmy couldn't bring herself to reply. Everything hurt. Had she been able to think of the right words, they would have gotten caught on the way up her throat.

And then they received the call, which echoed from the kitchen. To Kimmy, the distance between her and reality grew until a hole opened up before her. It screamed and gnawed at her ankles, snarling its unforgiving taunts. She didn't hear her mom cry out when she received the news that Roger Hanscom had died of a *goddamn heart*

attack. Instead, she fell further and further into her grief, a place she would remain for weeks to come.

When Ben left his room in a hurry, worried about his mom's safety, he had noticed Kimmy's state. How she seemed to be peering at something far away, lost and dazed as the world screeched to a confusing halt. Though it had been faint (a gnat tickling the back of his neck), he, too, felt that something bad had happened to his dad.

It was only when the Hanscom siblings crossed Derry's town line that their ability to sense. . . things, things that were off, began to grow. An ability that would stay with them from long before then and long after that.

"Please tell me this isn't Derry," Kimmy groaned while peering out of the passenger window.

It was a rainy day, the kind that made you want to stay inside and curl up beneath a blanket while you watched TV. Through the droplets that had managed to cling on to the car, the teen watched as they drove towards their new home. Based on the stories of her mother's childhood, Kimmy figured that it wasn't that big of a place to begin with.

She didn't necessarily have anything against small towns. In fact, she found them charming and, for the most part, liked how they remained true to their roots. Derry wasn't even the first town her family had lived in. Her dad had been a welder, a job that would cause them to move from time-to-time. . . .

An ache, vague yet persistent, clutched her heart. They all knew that he put himself in danger every time he went to work. Despite the risks, it didn't seem to faze him. Perhaps it should have taken away some of the blow, the knowledge that his work could backfire on him. Ironically, it wasn't welding that ended his life, a life that had seven years left before he reached fifty. No. It was a fucking heart attack that took him.

The universe really did blow sometimes. This was no exception.

Kimmy's mom managed to peek at her eldest. "I know it's not much, but we have to make it work."

Mom was right. Dad dying had greatly lessened the Hanscom's income. Now they were on their way to live with Kimmy's awful aunt and pain in the ass cousin.

But it wasn't the lack of size that Derry, Maine failed to possess that caused her to say what she had. No. It was the dread that tumbled around her stomach, reminding her that her dad wouldn't be joining them. Being here made everything seem final, unchangeable.

"I like it, Mom," piped-up Ben from the back seat.

Sweet, innocent Ben who hid behind books. Smart, observant Ben who felt uncomfortable in his own skin. He was the only one who seemed to have a firm-enough grasp on their current circumstances.

Their mom smiled at her youngest's response, making Kimmy feel like a jerk. She hadn't meant to come off as moody, to make it sound like she would make things difficult.

Kimmy slid down the tattered, leather seat. "I'm just surprised that we haven't seen any cows, is all," she grumbled.

Her family saw through her, though. They knew that Kimmy did her best to hide her emotions, that she tried to put on a brave face. They could tell that she was anxious about staying here. (She'd begun bouncing her left leg the moment she'd noticed the "Welcome to Derry" sign, green and stiff - the sign, not her.)

A lot had happened in the past few months, most of it far from good. Dad's death, not being able to keep up with rent, moving somewhere that their mom had once fled. . . .

Kimmy closed her eyes, hoping that the time they spent with her aunt would fly by.

If only she knew how much trouble her wish would bring her.

Aunt Jean scrunched her nose in disapproval the moment she noticed

the outfit Kimmy wore.

"You allow your daughter to dress like a slob?" Aunt Jean asked her sister beneath the porch awning.

Kimmy was both confused and shocked by her aunt's greeting. She hadn't expected her baggy acid wash jeans and over-sized pink sweatshirt to be a problem. Then again, this was her aunt. She should have known that her self-righteous relative would find fault in her no matter what she did. It certainly wasn't the first time this had occurred.

Mom looked at Kimmy, a hint of aggravation from her sister's greeting swimming in her eyes. "We've been driving for two days, Jean. I wanted my kids to be comfortable."

Aunt Jean managed to tear her eyes off of her niece and focus on Ben. "Still fat, I see."

Anger boiled beneath Kimmy's skin as her body shook with the need to yell at her condescending aunt. No one picked on her brother's weight, *no one*. It pissed her off, and rightfully so. The only thing that people seemed to notice about Ben was that he was heavier than most pre-teens. That he'd run out of breath before he finished running a mile or that he usually chose a cupcake over an apple for dessert. They refused to see how intelligent he was, how he could piece things together before any of his peers. Nor did they care how kind he was to others - helping those who, too, knew what it was like to be picked on by their peers. Memories of kids calling Ben god-awful names and pushing him around while they jeered rushed to the front of her mind. Needless to say, it spurred her on.

"Still sitting high and mighty on your bony ass, I see," Kimmy growled.

That really caught her aunt's attention.

Good.

The older woman's neck snapped in her niece's direction. With her lips twisted into a vicious snarl, Aunt Jean hissed, "What did you say

to me?"

Still high on her anger, Kimmy was more than happy to repeat. Before she could add on to what she'd said, her mother stepped in while Ben grabbed hold of her sweatshirt.

"She didn't mean it," promised her mom.

Kimmy wanted to correct her, to say that she sure as fucking hell meant it, but before she could, Ben whispered, "Kimmy. Please, don't."

The sound of her brother's voice began to ground her, to help her focus back into herself. Her temper, which had risen painfully so, began to simmer down. It was usually in check, hardly ever making an appearance. It seemed that her aunt had gotten the best of her, the last straw drawn on an already stressful week.

"I am doing my Christian duty, letting you and your ungrateful children stay with us."

"I know."

"If you don't get ahold of your daughter, Arlene, I will be forced to make you leave my home."

The power Aunt Jean held over them, and the chance she had to make their life even more difficult than it was, scarred Kimmy. Should any of them slip in a way that displeased her aunt. . . .

Her mom seemed to feel similarly, though she managed to swallow her pride for the well-being of her kids. And for her husband, who would have wanted them to be safe and comfortable. "I understand. We're grateful that you've allowed us to stay with you and Jim."

Jim was Aunt Jean's only child. He was a year older than Ben and liked to let everyone know it. Jim even went as far as acting as if he was older than Kimmy (which was honestly more laughable than infuriating). At this rate, he'd most likely end up becoming an even worse version of his mother. It also didn't help that he liked to cry wolf to his mom like a baby bear. Even if she didn't believe him, Aunt Jean was more than happy to make sure everyone else did.

With a dismissing huff, Aunt Jean smoothed out her wrinkle free skirt. "Jim will show you to your rooms," she announced before making her way back indoors.

The screen door *whooshed* shut behind her, leaving the family of three to find her son on their own.

True to Aunt Jean's word, Jim led them to their rooms. He took his aunt to her room first. (A sewing room that had a fold out bed shoved up against the left wall.) He then immediately marched away, not bothering to greet Kimmy or Ben, nor did he care to make sure that they kept up with him. It didn't take long for him to point out their room.

"That's yours," he said before jerking his head towards a door that was down the elaborately decorated hall. "And that's mine, so you losers better not think about going near it, or else I'll make your lives a living hell."

The siblings shared a bewildered look. Although, they should have known that he'd pull a stunt like this.

"Whatever, Jim," said Kimmy, more than ready to settle down.

Jim rolled his eyes. "*Whatever, Jim,*" he poorly mimicked his cousin. "Just leave me the fuck alone."

Before either of them could respond, Jim stomped off to his bedroom and slammed its door shut behind him.

"Leave it to Jim to be a complete brat," Kimmy sighed, gaining a smile from Ben.

"Maybe it's because he doesn't like his mom," he suggested.

"Maybe." Kimmy turned the gold handle of their door, carefully swinging it open. What laid before her made her jaw drop in shock. "You've got to be kidding me."

Their room was slightly smaller than the room their mom was in, which wasn't much to begin with. Two twin sized beds were shoved

into the small space, one near the door while the other near the window. A single closet and a small dresser were the only places they had to store their clothes. Two tiny tables rested near the bed's heads, where alarm clocks and faded lamps from the early sixties sat. A brown rug was placed in the center of the room, completely mismatching its pale blue walls.

It felt. . . like she was inside of a clown car. She knew that she shouldn't be complaining. She really shouldn't. They were lucky they had a place to sleep in to begin with. Aunt Jean could have very well shoved them in her dank basement or in the dusty attic. *But still.*

Ben was the first to enter.

"It's not that bad," he remarked, taking in the bedroom from another perspective. "The curtains look new."

The curtains. . . .

At least one of them was trying to remain positive.

Kimmy tried not to sigh as she followed her brother, shutting the door behind her. "I feel like dear Aunt Jean is trying to punish us for merely existing."

Ben shrugged his shoulders. "Probably."

She snorted.

"Which bed do you want?" Ben asked.

"I don't know."

Her brother eyed the bed nearest the window. She could tell that he wanted to take it, but didn't want to come off as demanding.

"Why don't you take that one. I'll take the one nearest the door."

"You sure?" he asked tentatively.

"Yep," she confirmed, dropping her things on top of her unmade bed. "I'll be perfectly alright over here."

Ben smiled. "Thanks, Kimmy."

"No problem."

The brother and sister soon began putting their respective corners together. The dresser was divided between them, as was the closet. It helped that there wasn't much to unpack, since the truck that held the rest of their things had yet to arrive.

As Kimmy put some of her posters onto the wall, she said, "I was thinking about getting up before six tomorrow."

The time his sister wanted to get up made Ben want to faint. "Why would you want to do *that*?"

"The less time I have to spend with Aunt Jean and Jim the better. Actually, if it goes well, I was thinking about doing it pretty much every day."

"*Every day*?"

"Geeze, Benny. It's not like I told you that I'm going to burn down a church."

"What about sleep?"

Ah. Sleep.

She did like to sleep in for a bit during the weekends. It was the only time she'd be able to do it, especially during the school months. Though early September, they had missed the first week and a half of class, considering the move. In a sense, she only had Saturday to do so. Her aunt, unfortunately, was making them attend Sunday morning service at Derry Methodist.

"I'll go to bed early."

"Before midnight?"

"Yes, Benny. Before midnight. Anyway, there's a reason I brought it up." She turned her head, hands pressed against her beloved Freddie Mercury poster. "I wanted to see if you want to join me. Get away

from everyone for a bit?"

Ben let her question sink in, brows drawn together as he debated whether to take his sister up on her offer. "I think I'll pass for now."

Kimmy raised a dark brow.

"I like sleeping in," he admitted, shrugging his shoulders as if to say 'what are you gonna do?'

"Enough to face her royal uptightness and Lord Bratty?"

"At least for tomorrow I am."

The fourteen-year-old let out a low whistle. "You're braver than I'll ever be."

"Sleep makes you do risky things."

"I'll say." She smiled. "My offer still stands if you decide to take me up on it."

Ben thanked her, shortly before the sound of light knocking answered him.

"It's open!" they replied in unison.

Their mom peeked into their new room, eyes scanning it with great scrutiny.

"Hi, Mom," said Ben. "Are you unpacked?"

The sound of her son's voice brought her back to reality. "Can I come in?"

"Sure," Ben said, Kimmy nodding her head in agreement.

Their mom gestured her hand towards the end of Kimmy's bed, asking for permission to sit, which she was given. It squeaked beneath their mom's weight, creaking like the unpolished cogs of a clock.

Well, that's not going to keep me up at night.

Once settled, their mom's face softened. "I know that neither of you want to be here."

That's a bit of an understatement.

"If I'm being honest, I don't want to be here, either." A look of worry glossed over their mom's eyes as she thought of a distant memory. She never went too much into her childhood, yet Kimmy could tell that her mom had more unhappy memories of Derry than happy ones. It's why she left the moment she graduated from high school. She even told her husband that there was no way in hell that she'd ever return. No matter what.

And now, here their mom was, nineteen years later. Stuck in the place that she spoke poorly of.

"We're lucky that your aunt has taken us under her wing," she said, a dull smile plastered across her face. It seemed that she was doing this more for herself than for Kimmy or Ben. "When I have enough money saved up, I'll buy us a house far from here."

The thought of having a place to plant roots filled Kimmy with excitement. Since the fall of 1983, buying a house had always been the plan.

"I'm going to find a gig that won't cause us to move," her dad had announced, his voice filled with determination.

Being nine at the time, Kimmy imagined a towering tree house to play in with Ben and a dog to run around the yard with. It had been nice, hearing her parents say: "We're one day closer to having our own house." The older she became, the more she realized that these proclamations were a way to keep the dream alive.

"But until then, I need both of you to behave." The glance she sent Kimmy's way made it clear that this was especially aimed at her.

She's saying this because of what happened earlier.

Kimmy looked down at her sock-covered feet in guilt. "Sorry," she whispered.

"I just need you to be good to them, even if they don't deserve it."

She wanted to protest, to say how unfair it was. Why do they have to treat Aunt Jean and Jim nicely when all they would do was treat them like shit?

Her dad's philosophy had been "treat others with kindness, but never let them walk over you." He'd say this to her whenever she came home from school after a ruff encounter with some of her classmates. She may not always live up to her dad's beliefs, but she sure as hell did her absolute best.

And now, her mom was telling her to go against what he'd tried to teach her and Ben.

Instead of ranting what was on her mind, she grumbled, "Whatever you say."

"*Kimmy*."

"I'll try, Mom. But I -"

"You *can* and you *will*," her mom interrupted, leaving her slack-jawed.

Did her mom seriously give her the my-word-is-final tone-of-voice? She hadn't used it since Kimmy was in seventh grade. After being told that she wasn't allowed to stay up late to watch Queen perform on *SNL*, Kimmy had thrown a fit. Her mom replied in that firm voice of hers: "Kimberly Anne Hanscom, you will go to bed this instant."

That had been understandable, but *this*? To take shit from people so that they could have a place to live?

"Benny?" their mom said, softening her voice as she ignored the rage burning within Kimmy's hazel gaze.

Ben looked between his sister and his mom, seeming to not know how to respond, until: "Okay."

"Thank you, sweetie." Their mom looked at Kimmy, expecting to hear her promise that she would behave.

Through gritted teeth, arms tightly pressed against her chest, the teen grumbled, "Fine. I'll be good."

For a moment, it looked like Mom was going to reach out a hand and grip her balled fist in gratitude. At the last second, she stopped, fingers outstretched in the air. After nodding her head in appreciation, their mom got back on her feet.

"I'm going to finish bringing in our things. I'll see you both at dinner."

And then, she was gone, leaving the siblings to stew in an agreement they never wanted to make in the first place.

"Kimmy?"

"Yeah, Ben?"

"Are you. . . okay?"

Honestly, she wasn't. She wanted to get out of the house, hide away somewhere where she could scream to her heart's content. But the rain was forecasted to soon pick up again, making things unideal to venture through. Still. . . it was tempting.

Choosing to give a partial truth, Kimmy announced, "I'm bored. Wanna play cards?"

He knew that she was far from being 'okay,' that she held in a lot of what was on her mind. Granted, he wasn't pleased that their mom wanted them to be nice to two of the worst people he knew. But what could he do? It wasn't like he'd be able to get them a better living situation based solely on his desire to get out of there. Arguing was pointless. Though not ideal, acceptance and lying-low was the safest choice.

"Sure."

As they began a round of Go Fish, the rain continued to patter against the window. It allowed Kimmy to forget for a moment that she was somewhere that she would love to be miles and miles away from. She wanted to be in Houston. She wanted to watch a John Wayne marathon with her parents and Ben. She wanted to lounge in the

living room of the place she had called home for almost an entire year.

Home.

If only it wasn't so far away.

If only it wasn't gone forever.

If only. . . .

Little did Derry's newest inhabitants know that something menacing lurked below. Slinking *IT*'s way through the sewers was a creature that would soon come to haunt their steps. A thing that they wouldn't be able to escape, be it beneath their sheets or the deepest parts of their minds.

Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.

IT was only getting started.

And oh, how terrifying *IT* would be.

Oh, look. Another *IT* appearance. What is *IT* up to? Lots of stuff, I would imagine - all bad, of course.

I know that Mr. Hanscom does not die of a heart attack anywhere outside of my story. I wanted him to not be alive, like in the book and miniseries, but I also wanted to give my own spin on his death.

What do you think of Kimmy so far? I feel like she would be a bit protective of her family, especially after her dad died. We'll dive more into who she is soon.

I also want to thank those of you who have favorited, followed, and/or left a review. I'm glad that you enjoy what I have so far, and I hope that what I have instore makes you happy :)

3. Chapter 2

This took some time. The semester is getting crazy, seeing as I'll be graduating in December. I hardly have any time or motivation to write for fun, which is absolutely superb. On a more positive note, the news that's being released about *Chapter Two* is super exciting. I cannot wait for fall of 2019! It's going to be an emotional rollercoaster, that's for sure.

Unrelated, but the new *Into the Spider-Verse* trailer is so good. Spider-Ham is my favorite. It's truly a blessing that John Mulaney provides his voice. Not to mention that we get to see an older version of Peter Parker. God, I could talk about this film for hours.

In this chapter, we see Stan. It was both a bit challenging and fun to write from his perspective. I hope you like reading his POV as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Disclaimer: Once again, I am not the author of *IT*.

Enjoy :)

True to her word, Kimmy woke bright and early - long before those who didn't dare to think that things happened before eight o'clock. Though it seemed like her aunt would be the 'up before the sun' kind of person, this seemed to only pertain to Sundays. Which, for the most part, worked out well for the teen.

She made sure she was quiet as she readied herself for the day, careful not to wake a snoring Ben. Kimmy slipped on a sweater that was two sizes too big and jeans that would have fallen to her feet had she not put on a belt. After filling her backpack with comics and a sketchbook, she made her way to the kitchen. She stuffed a slice of bread into her mouth and placed plenty of fruit and a PB&J sandwich into her bag's front pocket. After making sure that everything was cleaned and put back in its place, she made her way towards freedom.

Her Walkman, which was gently held within her grasp, was ready to play her favorite mix tapes.

Birds began to chirp as a cool morning breeze brushed her cheeks, greeting her with a welcoming glee.

Come join us, they seemed to whisper. We'll keep you safe.

No arguing there.

Kimmy noticed as she strolled down the street that the clouds were tinted a light pink and soft yellow, like a pastel painting. She wouldn't be surprised if a few *My Little Pony* characters showed up to greet the sun with an annoyingly cheerful dance.

She slipped her headphones atop her reddened ears and pressed the play button. "Space Oddity" softly played as she thought of places that she could hide herself in. With a determined look burning in her eyes, she began her long-awaited walk towards a fairly calm day.

Here's hoping no one makes me come back.

Stan Uris considered himself to be a responsible person. He listened to his mom when she asked him to do his chores, which he usually was on top of before she had the chance to do so. He remained silent during his father's sermons unless instructed otherwise. He studied for tests, turned his homework in on time, and ate all the food placed upon his plate at dinner time.

Those in Derry who took notice of how mature the rabbi's son was would comment on how respectful he was.

"He'd never talk back to his authority figures," they'd say with delight, as if planning a scheme that would test him.

A true Boy Scout.

His Scout leader would be proud, which he was.

Admittedly, it was rather lonely. It was a great honor to be trusted by his peers and elders, he wasn't against that. It was the fact that

people seemed to forget that he was a twelve-year-old boy, not a grown man. Which was a burden at times. Especially with a father who expected so much from his son. He'd say things that made Stan feel ten years older than he was, and then seconds later he'd give him that look - one that was filled with disappointment.

"I expected more from you, Stanley," he would say if Stan couldn't remember what was discussed at service. *"The rabbi's son should know these things."*

There were other less positive things his temperament and lifestyle brought him. If people didn't appreciate his personality, they made fun of it. The town bullies, which included an older boy named Henry Bowers and his gang of assholes, would make fun of the fact that he was Jewish. They'd treat him like dirt, lower than dirt. They found his religion, his life, to be stupid. Because of this, it wasn't uncommon to cross paths with them at least a few times a week. Saturdays were usually bully free (keyword: usually). Stan would spend most of his day with his family and the rest of the members of Derry's only synagogue.

Though those rare Saturday leaned more towards brief than lengthy, Henry managed to put in his quota for the week by popping up when Stan least expected him to.

Aside from that, and the time he spent with his parents, Saturdays were, for the most part, uneventful.

But today. . . today was different.

On his way to the synagogue, he noticed that the tree nearby had someone sitting beneath it for the first time in years. And not just any person. A girl who looked to be around the same age as Stan. She had her knees bent to serve as a table for what looked like a *Spider-Man* comic book. Her eyes shifted back and forth, the tips of her fingers pinching the corner of the page. He'd never seen her before, here or anywhere else.

She had to be a new kid. There was no way that she was a born and raised Derry, Maine kid. He could tell, seeing as he was one himself.

There was something about her that stuck out to him, something that lingered in the back of his mind. Seeing her for the first time, he hadn't been able to figure out *what it was* about her that drew him in like a moth to flame. It was long after that he figured it out, after he'd gotten the chance to know her. (It was her kindness, protective nature, and ability to understand who you were that made his very being soar whenever he looked her way.)

Throughout service, his mind kept drifting back to the girl. Who was she? Why was she so close to the synagogue? Stan noticed that the adults glanced at her in confusion and annoyance as they made their way past her. It wasn't like she was on the property, but it was close enough to make it look as if she were. Few non-Jews bothered to be so close, unless they were invited by one of the members to attend. Thinking that she'd be long gone by the time service had finished, Stan was surprised to see she hadn't moved an inch.

The only difference now was that she was chewing an apple and had taken out a sketchbook. Stan watched as she lazily moved her hand across the more-than-likely blank pages. She would peer across the street every now and again. He'd been curious enough to look for what she'd been looking at. Stan didn't see anything at first, but then he saw a small cluster of robins pecking at the ground in search for food.

His heart beat against his chest in excitement.

Did she like birds, too?

Not only was he the only Jewish student at Derry Middle School, he was the only pre-teen who liked bird watching. It was his favorite pass time, for it gave him peace of mind when everything felt too crazy. Even if he wasn't having a bad day, he still enjoyed watching the winged animals of the small-minded town. Birds didn't bother you. As long as you kept your distance, they didn't expect anything from you. And they were beautiful, with the ability to fly wherever they want whenever ever they want – creatures who held freedom between their glistening feathers.

Stan wished he could have what they had.

He wanted to see if she was still there, drawing birds. But it was Sabbath, which meant he was the rest with his family. It was their time to reflect on god together, be it lounging in the living room or sitting at the dining room table. Though his parents were devoted to their faith, they were a little more lenient than some. Sometimes they'd let him leave the house for an hour or two if he agreed to return in time for dinner.

"Mom, can I go out for a little bit?" he asked his mother around five.

Without looking up from the book she was reading, she asked, "What for?"

"I want to do some bird watching."

His parents liked that he enjoyed bird watching. It was something they knew helped make sure that he was well behaved and not spending time with the wrong crowd.

"Don't go too far," she replied.

"I won't."

As promised, he didn't stray farther than the synagogue.

On my honor I will do my best

To do my duty to god and my country and to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

Sitting beneath the tree, the edges of a tattered quilt splayed out around her, was the girl. Still there. Still drawing, a look of deep thought etched across her slightly scrunched face.

Stan's palms felt clammy as he clutched his binoculars between them, heart racing. He didn't have much experience talking to girls,

especially ones who may or may not like birds as much as him. The idea of having someone who got him, even if it was only one part of what made Stan. . . well, *Stan* made him both feel sick to his stomach and eager to meet her all at once.

It also didn't hurt that she was pretty. Then again, that didn't necessarily make things easier, either. What if all he could manage to do was stare at her like an idiot?

He could imagine her asking him if he had always been a staring creep or if it was his first time acting like one.

Who, me? A creep? I'm more of a loser, but I guess I could add that to my list of reasons why I shouldn't talk to people who are not my loser-y friends.

He shook his head, curls bouncing against his blotchy forehead.

Focus, Stan. She's a girl, not an archangel.

With a determined, shaky breath, Stan stepped forward.

Here goes nothing.

At first, all Kimmy could hear was A-Ha's "Take On Me." She didn't hear someone saying "Hello." Nor did she hear him repeat, "Hell. . . o?"

However, she did feel someone tap her shoulder, causing her to look in said boy's direction.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, shoving the headphones off of her ears and onto her shoulders. "Sorry. I didn't hear you."

The boy before her had curly blonde hair and a rather tentative look plastered upon his face. He looked like he was the same age as Ben, though she couldn't tell for certain. If he was, perhaps he could befriend Benny! But. . . asking him to do that didn't sound like the best idea. She didn't want her brother's only "friend" to have been bugged into becoming such. It would crush Ben, though he'd be smart enough to figure out that Kimmy had something to do with it.

He looked down at the ground. "It's fine," he said, just above a mumble and a whisper.

When he didn't say anything else, nor looked back up, Kimmy felt as if she wasn't supposed to be where she was at. Her luck this happened to be his spot, his *special* place.

She gestured her free hand around the area. "Do you need me to leave?" she asked. She hoped that the answer would be along the line of "of course not" rather than "you bet your fucking ass you do." Her luck the first townie, aside from her aunt and cousin, she encountered would be a negative one.

The boy's head snapped up, eyes wide and mouth formed in the small shape of an 'O.'

"No!"

Kimmy raised a brow at this. He sounded a bit worried, more so than she'd expected. In fact, she didn't expect to hear this at all.

Seeming to have realized this, a light blush of embarrassment colored his cheeks. "You. . . you don't have to move. You can stay. I mean, it's not my place, so I can't tell you to go away. Not that I want you to. Leave, that is."

It took a moment for her to figure out how to reply. When she did, she smiled - giving him a good look at the shiny, silver braces she couldn't wait to be rid of. She found his response to be adorable, though she knew he probably wouldn't like to hear this thought. "Thanks."

Instead of moving to sit down, the boy remained where he stood. He kept eyeing her blanket, as if he wanted to join her. But he kept silent, as if he was worried that she'd snap at him that he shouldn't be a baby and sit down on the goddamn grass. But it was still a bit damp, even though it had been hours since the last storm had passed. Slightly or not, she couldn't blame him for not wanting to sit on the ground. Muddy pants, even a little, didn't sound ideal or comfortable.

Moving to make room for the unnamed boy, Kimmy pointed towards

the available space with a warm smile. "It's kind of muddy. You can sit on my blanket if you want to."

Now he was looking at her as if he wasn't sure how to respond to her. His eyes were slightly wider and unblinking, and his mouth had formed another 'O.'

"I swear I don't bite." He didn't respond. She gave him a side smirk. "Or do I?"

That got a brief laugh, like a huff of wind, from him. Something akin to amusement flashing across his still indecisive gaze.

"I don't mind."

And then, after another moment of silence, he slowly made his way towards the edge of the thick blanket. "Thanks," he said, sight focused on his still adjusting legs.

She held out a hand, causing him to look at her again. "My name's Kimmy."

He slowly stretched out his own, still unsure about whether he should further engage. Little did Kimmy know that the reason for this was because his heart was beating wildly against his chest. Poor Stan felt nervous and worried and curious and unsure all at once.

"Stan," he said.

Kimmy's smile grew. "Nice to meet you, Stan."

"Likewise."

Adorable! And formal, too.

Perhaps it wouldn't be as crappy living here. If she could make a friend or two who made her already messy life feel slightly less painful. . . . Maybe Derry wouldn't be the worst place she lived.

"Do you. . . do you like birds?" asked Stan, indicating towards her open sketchbook.

Kimmy tilted her head slightly to the side. "I guess." She looked down at the delicate, tiny bodies of the yet to be finished robins. "I mean, they're cool to look at. You?"

Stan nodded his head.

"Do you have a favorite?"

A spark must have been ignited inside of Stan, for his entire being lit up. Any sense of unease he might have felt melted away as a beaming smile made a blinding appearance. "Yeah! There's so many to choose from, though. I like the king eider and the long-tailed duck. And then there's the common house swallow and the violet-green swallow. But nothing compares to the. . . ." he had been rambling with so much excitement and passion that it felt jarring when he trailed off. What happened? Was he okay? Was he painfully shy that it took some time for him to get out of his shell?

"You okay?" was the only thing she could think to ask.

Stan nodded his head.

"What's wrong?"

He shook his head. "Nothing. It's just. . . ."

"Just?"

His cheeks had a faint tinge of pink on them. "It's just that people usually don't like it when I talk a lot about birds."

"Oh?"

And then it hit her.

Oh.

"I like the tree swallow," she soon added, choosing the first bird that popped into her head. She didn't know a lot, but she knew some of the more commonly known ones, like gold finches and swans. "They're a pretty shade of blue."

That seemed to bring him back out of his retreat.

"Yeah. They are," he said, the tension in his shoulders slightly decreasing.

"What's that one you were talking about, the one that 'nothing compares to?'"

"You don't mind?"

Now it was Kimmy's turn to shake her head. "Not at all. You should hear me when I talk about Freddie Mercury or comic books. I don't shut up."

"The red chested humming bird."

Kimmy smiled. "Yeah?"

Stan nodded his head.

"Guess I'll have to look it up sometime."

"Do you have a bird book?"

"No."

"You should check out the library. They should have a few books about birds available."

"Awesome," said Kimmy, happy that she was still making conversation with someone. "Thanks, Stan."

A light blush graced his cheeks, though Kimmy didn't seem to notice. He shrugged his shoulders as if it were not that big of a deal that he suggested some reading material to her. "You're welcome."

For the rest of their time together, they sat in comfortable silence. They watched the birds and took turns sketching the ones that stuck out to them the most. Was it a bit obsessive, focusing primarily on one single thing? Probably. But neither of them could be happier as they shared what they were passionate about.

As much as she liked being away from half of her family, Kimmy was the first to go.

"I need to get going," she announced, placing her things into her empty backpack. "My aunt will kill me if I'm not back in time for dinner." She glanced at him from the corner of her eyes. "This was fun. Maybe we could do it again?"

"Sure," Stan said, eagerly nodding his head.

"Cool. Same time tomorrow?"

"Same time tomorrow," he echoed, much to Kimmy's amusement.

"See you tomorrow, then," she confirmed.

After hiking her backpack over her shoulders, she bid him farewell. As she made her way down the street, a goofy grin stretched across Stan's face, stars forming before his eyes. He hadn't had many crushes in the past, so he had yet to figure it out that he liked her. By thinking of her welcoming gaze and her elegant sketches, Stan's crush continued to grow.

The smile didn't leave. It stayed with him as he rode his bike home, when he was greeted by his mother, and when he sat down for his evening meal.

"What's making you so happy?" his mom asked, passing him the mashed potatoes.

Stan, for a moment, was pulled out of his musings. He could lie, say something that could come back to bite him in the butt, or he could tell the truth. "I made a new friend today," he answered, having decided to go with the latter.

"I thought you were bird watching," his mom said, not sure how or why he had the time to do so.

The pre-teen looked at his still steaming meal. "They were under the tree I went to," he replied just above his breath. "They like birds, too."

"What's their name?" asked his dad, not bothering to look up from the

piece of lemon chicken he was cutting on his plate.

"Kimmy. She just moved here."

"A new kid?" asked his mom.

"Yes."

"A goy." His father stated this so simply, as if he already knew everything about Kimmy. After all, he was the rabbi. He'd know if they had new members, which they didn't. They hadn't for quite some time.

"I. . . I didn't ask."

That seemed to be enough information for his dad.

"Be careful, Stanly. She could be trouble."

"Yes, sir."

For the rest of the meal, the family sat in silence.

As Stan attempted to fall asleep, he couldn't stop thinking about what his dad had implied at dinner. How she could be bad company based on the possibility that she might not be Jewish. But his dad knew that his small group of friends weren't Jewish, that they had their own beliefs on religion. So why was his dad hinting that it would be wise to be wary of her?

Why?

Why?

Why?

But then he remembered how her slightly crooked teeth gleamed silver when she smiled. And her voice, calm and laced with humor. She had been nice to him, hadn't made fun of him for liking a hobby that was usually taken up by the elderly.

She may not be religious for all he knew, but he didn't care. Kimmy

didn't seem like she could bring him trouble. If anything, good things could happen. For starters, he knew that his friends were going to lose their minds when they find out he had managed to befriend a girl. Besides, it didn't hurt to make more friends.

As Stan drifted off to sleep, his goofy smile returned as his eyes began to droop into a deep slumber. That night, he dreamed of birds and of a girl drawing shapes across a dirt covered ground.

Yeah. Stan's dad is an asshole. I mean, pretty much every dad in the film is a fucking piece of work. *But still*. Fuck that guy. I also included Stan's Boy Scout background since I think it fits his character. Maybe they'll mention it in the upcoming film? Probably not. But, yeah. He's a Boy Scout in this story.

The next chapter will be the first day of school for the Hanscom siblings. We'll also be introduced to a few more characters, both cannon and original.

Until next time, see you later :)

4. Chapter 3

Wow. It's been awhile, hasn't it? Sorry about that. But, hey, the final *IT* trailer's been released! Words cannot describe how excited I am.

Question: has anyone seen the new *Swamp Thing* series? I'm addicted. Like, it's a problem. I'm way behind, though - mostly due to the fact that my free trial expired before EP5 was uploaded. Good news is that I now know who Andy Bean is. I love him, and I cannot wait to see him in *Chapter 2*.

Disclaimer: I don't own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Kimmy was on top of making sure Ben woke before the crack of dawn Monday morning. He was still exhausted from their day at Derry Methodist. Their five hour adventure included a drab Sunday school class (the teacher had a monotone voice) and a lengthy sermon about the importance of loving your fellow man. She'd nearly fallen asleep on several occasions, but Aunt Jean prevented this by angrily slapping Kimmy's knees with a pamphlet.

There wasn't anything wrong with religion. No. Kimmy believed that everyone had a right to decide their own truth. It was the fact that she was being forced to take part in something she didn't follow that made her uncomfortable with the arrangement. Kimmy couldn't speak for her brother, but she could tell that he would have been happier if he'd been allowed to read one of his books.

Ben moaned in protest when she shook him awake.

"Come on, Benny. We gotta get out of here before everyone wakes up."

He managed to peek open a glossy eye. "Before Mom?"

It sounded shitty when he said it out loud. For a moment, she considered staying long enough to at least say good-bye to her mom before they parted ways. But then the argument they had a few days

prior came to the front of her mind. Needless to say, she could forgive herself for popping out before the rooster crowed.

"You can linger behind if it means that much to you," Kimmy said, trying her best to not come off as cranky. "But *I'm* getting the heck out of here in thirty minutes."

Ben blinked, squinting his eyes in confusion as he took in his sister's appearance. "Are you already dressed?"

"Yep," she confirmed, pulling the long white sleeves of her shirt over her palms.

"How long have you been up?"

"Since five."

He pulled his duvet over his head, burying himself beneath the warm sheets.

"*You're crazy, Kims,*" she said, pretending to continue their conversation in a grumbly voice. "We've established this." She smiled mischievously. "Besides," - she leapt atop Ben, earning a loud grunt of shock in response - "you love that I'm crazy."

"That's debatable," he mumbled, still hidden beneath the covers.

She shrugged her shoulders, as if to say 'what are you going to do?' "I'm going down to the kitchen to make some food. If you want to make a break for it, I'll be out the door by six."

Leaving Ben to dress, she proceeded to pack both of them their lunches (PBJs, Pringles, and change for milk). She grabbed two things of Pop Tarts for breakfast before heading to the front door. As she was about to leave, she heard someone making their way downstairs.

"Ready," Ben said just above a whisper.

Smiling, Kimmy ruffled her brother's hair. "Off to school we go."

Finding a tree to sit beneath near Ben's school, the siblings dug into

their small breakfast.

Tearing off a piece of her first Pop Tart, Kimmy held it in front of her. "Cheers," she said, tapping the tip of her meal against the chunk Ben had torn off.

"It's so early," Ben mentioned for the hundredth time.

"And peaceful."

"Still early."

"Better than dealing with Aunt Jean and Jim."

"Is it, though?"

"You wanna go back to bed when you'd be up in ten minutes anyway?"

"No."

"Thought so," Kimmy said with a smile, before it fell into a straight line. "You didn't have to come if you didn't want to, Benny."

"I know."

"So, you wanted to?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Kind of."

"Oh?" she asked, the right corner of her lip twitching upwards - her give-away for amusement.

Ben sighed, having caught on to his sister's playful attitude. "Yeah."

"Well, glad that that was enough for you to join me this fine morning."

The two watched in silence as the amount of students began to increase with each passing minute.

"You got this?" she asked him once the arriving crowd began to grow, hinting that it was almost time for them to part ways.

"I think so," he answered, eyes focused on an approaching group of boys around his age.

Kimmy frowned. He didn't sound so sure of himself, like he was way more worried about his first day than he was letting on. It was enough to make her worry more than she already was.

She sent him one of her 'I'm-trying-to-be-reassuring' smiles, silver brackets and all. God, she probably looked constipated. Ben's face twisted into a look of concern. That was enough to let her know that what she was trying to do wasn't working.

"Sorry. I was trying to help, but clearly I've made you question my sanity."

That drew the tinniest of smiles from him. "Maybe a little."

Kimmy stuck out her tongue in retaliation before glancing down at her watch. "Shit. It's 7:47." Before he could respond, Kimmy was on her feet, slinging her backpack across her shoulders. "We've got to get a -"

She hadn't been watching where she was going.

An undignified *oomph* left her chest. Her balance had been hard to regain, but once she had, she managed to get a look at what - who - she had run into. More than ready to apologize, Kimmy shifted her gaze towards the person's face. . . . Someone who was crushing the total rock n' roll look - acid wash jeans, a matching denim jacket, and a Pink Floyd T-shirt. She found herself even more breathless than before.

Holy mother of god, she's gorgeous.

Peering back at her, almost at eye-level, was an attractive blonde. Her eyes, a light and friendly blue, were focused on the gapping teen. Even her posture screamed "rocker," like she was about to leave for a concert at Madison Square Garden.

A crooked smile spread across the still unnamed girl's face. A dimple managed to pop up, giving Kimmy's heart a rapid flutter.

She's a goddess. A freaking rock goddess.

"You okay?" she asked, voice deeper than most of the boys Kimmy went to school with. It was husky, something that would be awesome if she decided to be a bartender. It had the potential to be the kind of badassery you'd expect to hear from someone who took zero shit.

"I'm Kimmy!" the frazzled teen burst out.

"Not the answer I was looking for, but hey." That dimple and smile grew even bigger. "I'm Zelda."

A sound that was caught somewhere between a hiccup and a mousy screech rumbled its way out of Kimmy.

Ohmygodohmygodohmygod.

She nearly fainted when Zelda laughed. The sound was higher than her normal tone of voice, like glass being brushed with a finger.

Dear lord, she's perfect.

Zelda glanced to the side, eyes focused on Ben. "Is he your brother?"

Ben, thank the lord, stepped up while his sister continued to flounder about.

"Hi. I'm Ben," he said, reaching out a hand to shake.

Zelda took it with an amused side grin. "Nice to meet you."

"Do you go here?" Ben asked, unsure if she was a middle schooler or not.

"Nah. I'm a freshman. I just dropped off some of my siblings."

"Really? Me, too!" Kimmy managed to get out.

"Sweet. I was actually about to head on over." When Kimmy didn't answer, Zelda raised her brows. "Would you like to walk with me?"

Ben, ever so discreetly, nudged his elbow against Kimmy's ribs, gaining both a rough cough and a "Yeah! That would be great!" from

her.

"Alright, then. Let's get going."

After sending Ben a wink and a thumbs up, Zelda put a hand on Kimmy's shoulder to steer her in the right direction.

Ben watched Kimmy leave for the high school. She stumbled over her feet once she hit the curb, her legs awkwardly catching herself before she could fall on her ass. It also didn't hurt that Zelda made sure this didn't happen, both chuckling at how clumsy she'd been.

He knew better than to ask if he'd see her after school. If the weekend and today were any indicator about when he'd see her again, chances were it would be around dinner. He smiled, happy that something good had finally happened in Derry. As Ben made his way indoors, making a mental list of questions to ask later on, he failed to notice that a boy by the bike rack had sent a look of longing his sister's way.

To say that Beverly was the prettiest girl at Derry Middle School was an understatement. She was the most beautiful girl in Derry, Maine. At least, to Ben she was. Her long, red hair shone like fire whenever the afternoon light hit it, turning it into a blend of bronze and auburn. And her smile. Heaven help him. Her smile was brief, but it was enough to draw him in even further. It was tinny and elegant, as if she were laughing softly at a well-delivered joke. Not to mention how meticulously she took notes during class. She never once looked up from her notebook, her left hand scribbling up and down at a well-paced speed.

Ben couldn't stop thinking about her, even though he had yet to officially meet her. He was so lost in thought that when he felt a light tap on his shoulder, he nearly leapt out of his seat. Turning around, eyes wide, he saw a boy - Eddie, he believed - with purple bruises beneath a bloodshot gaze. His thin hand hovered in the air as he sent Ben a sheepish smile. "Sorry. But, um. . . . Can I. . . can I borrow a pencil? Mine broke."

"Sure," Ben said, handing his classmate the one he was holding.

"Thanks."

Ben nodded his head in response, his sight never leaving Eddie's gaunt face. There was something about him that looked off. Like he wasn't taking care of himself. He wondered if he should check in on him after class. It didn't take Eddie long to figure out that Ben wouldn't return to his initial position. His body stiffed up, face turning red, as he began to furiously write in his notebook.

Before Ben got the chance to ask if he was okay, the teacher snapped, "Care to explain your lack of focus, Mr. Hanscom?"

He shot back into place, cheeks growing hot when he felt like everyone in the world was looking at him. "Sorry, Mrs. Douglas."

Mrs. Douglas' hawkish gaze shifted onto Eddie. "How about you, Mr. Corcoran?"

Eddie didn't lift his head, opting to let it hover above his desk instead. "No, Mrs. Douglas."

After a few giggles and an eye-roll from their teacher, class returned to normal. From the corner of Ben's eye, he could have sworn that Beverly was looking at him. At least, he thought she was. When he dared to look her way again, she was hunched over her notes as if she hadn't noticed a thing.

Kimmy's first day at Derry High School was absolutely fantastic. Completely out of this world. The most perfect way to begin the fall term. But that was because it included Zelda Wayne, her guide to all things school related.

Seeing as Derry High didn't have many students to begin with, they had half of their classes together. Kimmy had dreaded Algebra, with its ability to make her feel like an incompetent moron. But with Zelda by her side - sending her notes in swirly purple letters - nothing else seemed to matter. Instead of learning what an obtuse was, Kimmy memorized everything Zelda sent her way. Things like, '*avoid the sloppy joes*' and '*there's no way the mamas and papas are better than the runaways*.' Whenever their fingers brushed against each other, Kimmy

felt her stomach somersault. English was even better, seeing as she got the chance to listen to Zelda read the part of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. She was fantastic, since it sounded like she knew how to read Shakespeare - something she herself sometimes struggled with.

When lunch arrived, Kimmy was disappointed to learn that they didn't eat during the same time frame. Though it was a little dirty, she had an entire table to herself. No one bothered her, which she was thankful for. The last thing she wanted was to be bombarded with questions or listen to someone's attempt at a not-so-subtle braces joke. She re-read her favorite *The Incredible Hulk* comic the moment she polished off her meal.

She felt a thousand times better when she learned they had Beginners Art together.

Kimmy drew a table with a flower vase atop it while Zelda attempted to sketch what was meant to be a bowl of fruit. Kimmy didn't dare say it out loud, but it looked more like a plastic version of the Blob than something that was edible.

"I should mention that there's a group of bullies in the grade above us. You might have seen some of them earlier. They tend to go after those who don't fit in and, well, sometimes the new kids."

Although appreciative of the heads up, Kimmy wasn't that concerned.

"That's nothing new," Kimmy said matter-o-factly. "My brother's been bullied before, so I know what they're like."

That was enough to make Zelda stop and stare at her. The way she looked at her, with desperation and worry, made Kimmy shrink into herself a bit. They. . . they had to be run of the mill assholes. . . right?

"You don't understand. Henry Bowers and his pals aren't right. They're terrifying, especially Henry. I know you're not stupid, so don't do anything that will set them off."

"They can't be -"

"Patrick Hostetter keeps flies in his pencil case."

Well, that was weird.

"He likes to freak out the girls in our school with them. It's gotten to the point where no one but him finds it amusing. And Henry. . . ." Zelda's eyes shifted around the room. "He's done a lot of messed-up shit."

"What kind of 'shit?'"

"Trust me, you're better off not knowing."

"Zelda, what has he done?"

The teens stared at each other, neither of them relenting until Zelda admitted, "He kicked a dog, like *really* kicked it. Thank god it's still alive, but I heard it was in pretty bad shape. And that's not even the worse thing he's done."

Kimmy felt tears prickle the corners of her eyes. Imagining the pain the poor creature suffered made her want to hug it close, to let it know how much it was loved.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know you were sensitive to that," Zelda apologized, grabbing hold of one of Kimmy's hands. A shock shot up her arm, stopping the tears from falling. "Like I said, he's done a lot of messed-up shit. Henry's a ticking time bomb. You should stay away, in case he goes off. Trust me when I say you don't want to be one of his targets."

Normally, she would brush off this Henry Bowers as someone who had no life. But this was different. This time, she was actually worried. Not just for herself, but for her brother, too.

Oh god. Benny.

What if Henry went after Ben?

If he was as bad as Zelda claimed he was, then she needed to keep a closer watch on him. There was no way in hell she was going to let him touch Ben. Even if it came down to things getting ugly between her and Henry, blood and all.

All Kimmy could manage to do was nod her head and swallow the lump of worry that was stuck in the back of her throat.

Seeing that she'd gotten through to her, Zelda gave Kimmy a final squeeze and returned to her project. She squinted her baby blues while the tip of her nose slightly wrinkled in uncertainty. "Please tell me that this doesn't look as bad as I think it does."

Kimmy quickly returned to her own drawing, refusing to look away from it until the end of class.

"Boys, we have survived another day of mind-numbing education," announced Richie. He'd taken it upon himself to stroll ahead of his friends, hands shoved into the pockets of his jeans. "I suggest we destress by heading to the arcade for an evening of fun."

"Can't," said Stan, fists clasped around the straps of his backpack. "My parents want me to finish my homework before dinner."

"Party pooper."

"My mom won't let me. She says that there's a cold going around, and I for one do not want to drown in snot," added Eddie, the smallest of the group. He was always worried about germs and playing it safe when things felt iffy. He was the complete opposite of Richie "Trashmouth" Tozier, who was always one to throw caution to the wind and speak before he thought things through. He'd nearly given Eddie a heart attack last spring when he decided to pick up a dead mouse by its tail. His friend's squirms of discomfort only encouraged him to pretend to kiss it on the lips.

Richie glanced at the remaining Loser who had yet to answer. He used his seemingly bulging eyes (thanks a lot, glasses - you thick-lensed fucks) to send a 'say yes' his way.

Bill smiled apologetically.

"Oh, come on! Whatever happened to not caring about school? You know, like every other kid our age?"

"S. . . sorry, Richie. My parents invited s. . . some of their friends

over. I have to watch Georgie."

An exaggerated groan filled the autumn air. Richie tipped his chin towards the cloudy sky, its dull gray shading hinting at the high chance of rain. "You guys are running my plans, you know that?" He spun around, more than ready to teasingly chew them out for being unable to join him. "I mean, who wouldn't want to. . . ." A shit-eating grin replaced his chatter, making him look like a sinister elf. He'd noticed that one of his friend's focus had shifted to girl Riche had never seen before. "My, my, Stan. I thought you didn't like anyone."

While Stan furiously blushed, the rest of the group peered towards the person in question.

A girl, who had her dark hair held up by a giant scrunchie, was standing by the new kid - a chubby boy who they'd seen throughout the day. She was talking adamantly with him, a beaming smile never leaving her face. An ugly, red blush quickly spread across her skin when the new kid said something. After bumping his shoulder with her own, the two made their way down the street.

"Do you know who she is?" asked Eddie, following their retreating forms with laser focus.

Bill shook his head. "Never s. . . seen her before."

Three heads snapped in Stan's direction.

"Alright, spill. Do you know her?" questioned Richie, leaning in towards the now nervous Stan.

"She's. . . ."

"Yeah?"

"She's. . . ."

"We're listening."

With a huff of indignation, Stan started forward. "She's none of your business."

"Come on! Give us some detail!" called out Richie as he attempted to catch up. "What's her name? What's she like? Is she a good kisser? I bet she'd be a good kisser if she didn't have all those brackets. Bet you'd get your tongue caught in them, and then - "

"Beep, beep, Richie," Bill and Eddie said in unison.

Richie waved his hand at them in response. "You can't leave us hanging, man."

Stan, who had managed to reach and mount his bike, kicked the stand and began to paddle away. "Watch me."

Before the troublemaker could get another word in, Stan biked as fast as his legs could get him. This left his friends even more curious about this unnamed girl. Whoever she was, they wanted to find out more about her.

And Richie was determined to do just that, even if he had to stick his nose where it didn't belong.

They were so preoccupied with this development that they didn't notice the boy who ran past them. Tears of frustration streamed down his flushed face, lips trembling. His legs carried him towards Derry's canal, his quiet cries soon fading into the distance.

If any of you caught the *Pet Sematary* reference, we'll dive more into it in a couple of chapters. It was originally unintentional, but then I decided to incorporate it a bit more into this fic. Speaking of *Pet Sematary*, the remake was super disappointing. It's unfortunate, since it had the potential to be an enjoyable film.

In case you were wondering, Zelda's face-claim is Sabrina Carpenter.

I'll try my best to crank out the next chapter. Hopefully you'll see it before the end of August.

Until next time, see you later :)

5. Eddie Corcoran

This was a difficult chapter to write. I kept putting it off because of how dark it is. Listening to happy music while I wrote/edited helped a little, though. That being said, it's a bit graphic, so please read with caution.

Trigger Warnings: Abuse, violence, gore, suicide, and character death.

Disclaimer: I don't own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Eddie couldn't go home. Not when he knew that he was failing his social studies class. (He'd actually fallen behind in his school work the past couple of weeks.) An unforgiving whopping would be waiting for him if he faced his stepdad, one that would make it hard to sit down. There was a moment where he considered spending the night at the canal, but that thought passed as soon as he'd had it.

If his mom was home, he'd be less reluctant to return. But she was off on a business trip for at least another week. Part of him hated her for leaving them alone with the monster she'd married. If she'd stayed, his brother wouldn't be dead. Or maybe his stepdad would have killed her, too. He was prone to fits of rage, after all, the kind where he would tear the world apart while shouting drunken profanities.

Eddie's stepdad had been sober that night, the one that refused to leave him be. For the most part, things had been surprisingly calm. Eddie had foolishly thought that they wouldn't get a beating for once. That he and Dorsey could pretend that nothing was wrong and maybe get a few hours of uninterrupted sleep. But then Dorsey pissed the bed they shared. Eddie hadn't meant to scream when he felt the warmth of his brother's urine. All his brain could think to do was make a sound loud enough to wake the entire house.

Dorsey was as surprised as his brother, unaware that he'd wet himself. That soon shifted into fear when they heard their stepdad thundering down the hall. They knew before they saw him that he was mad as hell. He'd slammed open the door, the handle punching a

hole in the wall that he didn't seem to notice. No. All he could see was his fearful stepsons, crowded next to each other on the filthy mattress.

"Who the fuck screamed?!"

Neither of them had answered, opting to hold onto the others' hand in a trembling grip.

"Huh? Who screamed? Answer me, you sons of a -" He stopped, nose having finally taken in the pungent scent. They thought he was already angry enough. This. . . this was even worse. The worst they'd seen him in months. His jaw was tight from grinding his teeth together, eyes aflame with murderous intent. *"Why do I smell piss?"* The even tone he used made Eddie wish he'd go back to yelling at them. At least when he yelled they knew the most they'd get was a slap against some part of their body. This was worse. This was dangerous, hardly charted waters.

Eddie wanted to take the blame so his sibling didn't get the brunt of it, but Dorsey's fear of the unknown beat him to it.

"I . . . I wet the bed, sir," Dorsey had timidly admitted, his lower lip quivering.

Before Eddie could comprehend what had happened, their stepdad lunged forward. He angrily tore Dorsey from bed, holding him in the air for a fraction of a second. Eddie watched in silent horror as his brother cried out how he was hurting him, that he was sorry, that he didn't mean it. But their stepdad didn't listen. Instead, the door loudly shut behind him, cracking the edges of the doorframe.

At first, Eddie had been too stunned to move. He fell off of his bed when he heard the sickening sound of metal landing on bone and goops of blood splashing on tile. A pained scream soon followed. He remembered how his vision narrowed into tunnels, how his ears rung as he reached out a hand as if to open the door. But something stopped him.

And so he stayed frozen on the floor, tears prickling his eyes as he listened to Dorsey's pleas for mercy fade away. There was nothing

before their was a shriek of horrifying realization.

Though Eddie couldn't see what had happened, he had a feeling that Dorsey was in bad shape. It had to be worse than any of the other beatings any of the Corcoran boys had gotten in the past. And that was saying something. Eddie's stepdad had once shoved him into a coatrack because he forgot to put away his shoes. He peed blood for a week, fearfully thinking that his stepdad had finally managed to kill him. When Dorsey didn't reply or crawl back to their room, a sickening feeling punched Eddie in the stomach.

Something was wrong.

This was further confirmed when Dorsey never came back to bed.

The suffocating scent of bleach had bid him farewell the following morning. His stepdad didn't say anything beyond, "*Don't tell anyone about last night, you hear?*"

Eddie didn't argue.

He knew that his brother was dead when he didn't come home after school. The only thing Eddie could recall of that night was him heaving the contents of his stomach into a trash can.

His stepdad had been surprisingly calm around Eddie, hardly interacting with him. He knew he was bidding his time, doing his best not to push Eddie into spilling his guts to the police. But it was only a matter of time before something set him off again.

Even if his mom came back, he doubted that there was anything that could be done. His stepdad would claim he didn't know where Dorsey was. Eddie knew that if he even mentioned Dorsey, his stepdad would berate him for being "careless." As if that alone would draw in his mother's suspicions. Eddie's bloodshot eyes and rumbling stomach would be enough on its own.

I'm trapped, he lamented, fear of what waited for him gluing him to the grass he sat upon. *There's no way I'll get out of this.*

"Eddieeee."

Eddie jerked his head up from his knees, tear-filled gaze searching the canal. He thought. . . he thought he'd head - "Dorey?"

He couldn't see anything in the water, nor in the area surrounding him. Everything was silent, save for his heavy breathing and the chirping of birds. Even if he had heard right, there was no way it could have been his baby brother. Not if his suspicions were correct.

When he'd managed to convince himself he really needed to get some sleep, he heard it again: "*Eddiieee*."

There, at the bottom of the canal, was Dorsey. . . . A decaying, melting version of the boy he had once been. His brother's pale skin was heavily mixed with a sickly gray color, bits of it sagging off of his body's tiny frame. Clumps of his black hair were missing, his eyes a milky brown. The side of Dorsey's skull was pulsing, blood and brain matter nosily plopping into the water. A thick layer of dark liquid was caked across his left cheek and ratty pajama top. He looked like a zombie, a creature focused on consuming all forms of life it came across.

But that wasn't what made Eddie shake, made him wish he had never come to the canal in the first place. Dorsey wore a giant smile, one that someone who made wishes on shooting stars wouldn't be capable of producing. Even if he could, there was no way it would overtake the entire lower part of his face without breaking his jaw.

This. . . this couldn't be Dorsey. This wasn't Dorsey. How could it be? But. . . but. . . but. . .

"*Edddiieee. Eddie, why did you let him kill me?*" his brother hissed, a sound that resembled a snake and a singing tea kettle. "*Why would you let me die? You promised you would keep me safe.*"

He wanted to tell him how sorry he was, that he didn't mean to leave him alone. But he couldn't find it in himself to speak without it coming out as a terrified moan.

Pleasure danced in his brother's eyes, giggling at the state he'd managed to bring him to. "*Now it's your turn, big brother.*" Dorsey began to shift forward, a predator ready to pounce upon his prey. "*It's*

time for you to float!"

With a lunge and a scream, his actions jolted Eddie to his feet. He felt his brother's clawed hand scrape his back, missing his shirt by a hair. Wind raced past his ears as he began to run as fast as his legs could carry him. Squeals of joy echoed around Eddie as he picked up the pace. He couldn't let Dorsey catch him. He couldn't find out what he had planned for him, even if he deserved whatever his brother had in mind.

He had just made it to the tree-lined path that would take him home when he felt something leap on top on him, shoving him to the ground. Eddie yelped as his face collided atop the moist dirt where rigid rocks dug into his skin. Desperate, he dug his fingertips into the ground to feebly pull himself forwards. One of his finger nails had managed the break in half, blood oozing from his wound. Something warm and slimy dripped onto his arm. The clear liquid slid downwards, bubbly and foamy. Heart racing, he opened his mouth to cry for help when he felt thousands of needles pierce his neck.

Eddie Corcoran's voice died the moment he felt his head begin to tear from his body.

IT watched as Eddie's head rolled down the wood's inclined path, bouncing like a ball made of lead. *IT* chortled at the sight of *IT*'s latest's victims look of immense fear, gaping like a stunned fish. Oh how *IT* lived for the moment they realized that they could not escape *IT*. It was beautiful, and mouth-watering. The taste of his fleshy neck had sent *IT* into a state of euphoria, begging *IT* to consume the boy whole. He was almost as tasty as his brother. *Almost*. Just lacking enough to make *IT* hold off a little longer on *IT*'s feeding. *IT* knew that *IT* needed to be aware of *IT*'s need to stretch *IT*'s food out. *IT* didn't want to hibernate a year from now on an empty stomach. No sir-e.

IT grabbed Eddie's decapitated body with *IT*'s now gloved hand and slug it across *IT*'s shoulder before dancing towards his head.

What fun you and I will have, my scrumptious friend.

Richard Macklin was an abusive asshole through-and-through. At least, that's what his ex-wife had told him on a regular basis. He would beat the living daylights out of her for saying such a thing - which is why she left him.

But that didn't matter. Not when he was married to someone as beautiful as Monica Corcoran. She'd be hot if it weren't for the wrinkles around her eyes, the baby weight she never managed to shake off, and her kids.

If the boys didn't get on his goddamn nerves, he would have tolerated this. But oh no. The brats had to ruin everything, from his walls (covered in scribbles) to his sleep schedule. So, truly, it was Dorsey's fault that he was dead. The little shit had pissed the bed and screamed like his hair was on fire. All Richard had seen that fateful night that changed everything was red. He didn't mean to take it as far as he had. He just wanted to teach the boy a lesson. He didn't realize he'd grabbed the hammer he'd left on the kitchen counter until it was too late.

He was done for. If anyone found out that he'd killed his stepson, he'd land his ass in jail, maybe even be sent to the chair.

Richard had thought he'd covered his basis. He had buried the body, got rid of the evidence, and made sure that Eddie kept his goddamn mouth shut. But then Derry Elementary called, wondering when Dorsey would come back. Saying that he wasn't feeling well seemed like a safe enough response until Monica came back. He believed that if he kept his cool, no one would suspect him in the slightest.

But that all changed the moment he opened his fridge one Friday evening. There, surrounded by rows of beer, was the head of Eddie, his eyes wide with unspeakable terrors.

If anyone was asked about Richard Macklin, they'd almost-always share their thoughts. Some believed that he couldn't handle what might have happened to his stepsons. Others thought that he had killed them and could no longer take the guilt of his actions.

The truth was that Eddie and Dorsey relentlessly haunted their

stepfather. They'd whisper unspeakable things into his ears, vowing vengeance upon him for what he did to them. He couldn't sleep, couldn't eat, couldn't think. He'd beg through snot and tears that couldn't fall for them to leave him be. They didn't.

So he made them stop.

Monica returned two weeks later, exhausted and dreading the mood her husband might be in. She hoped to take her sons out for ice cream, to somehow make up for the abuse they suffered while she was away. The moment she reached her porch, she was hit by the scent of decay. She found her husband dangling in the bathroom, flies buzzing around his rotting body. After her bloodcurdling screams alerted her neighbors, she noticed a note on the sink. Written in giant, black letters were three shaky words: "THERE'S NO ESCAPE."

The following day, she filed a missing persons report for her boys. When what was left of her sons was returned to her months later, she knew her husband's final words were true. That no matter where she went or what she did, the ghosts of those she had lost would always follow her.

She left Derry for good in the winter of 1989. Monica had hoped that the distance would help her move on from those painful memories. But the further she went, the more she began to forget. It was like they never happened to begin with. . . .

We have reached the end of Eddie's story, though he'll be mentioned a few more times throughout the fic. I'm currently writing the next chapter, which I'm aiming to finish in the next couple of weeks.

Until next time, see you later :)

6. Chapter 4

God, this took me forever to write. I honestly didn't expect it to take this long. But I knew how important this chapter was, so it kind of needed it, sooo. . . yay, I guess? It's also insane how this is almost 6,000 words! Holy cow, how did I manage to do that?!

We also have a few days until *Chapter Two* is released. I'm so ready. I plan on watching it twice on the sixth, but I'm hoping to also see it on the fifth if my schedule allows it. I also went to the re-release for *Chapter One*. I loved seeing it in theatres again, and I both lived and died during the *Chapter Two* preview.

I've also made a playlist on Spotify that helps me spark my muse. They're all songs that remind me of *Bright*. If you're interested in giving it a listen, check out i-am-cloud-writes on Tumblr. There's a post that has a link to the playlist.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

By the end of the school week, Kimmy could happily say that she'd found a routine she could see herself sticking to. Her and Ben would leave by six so that they could wait for Zelda to arrive. She would later meet Ben at the library after school let out for the day, where they would stay until dinner. Afterwards, she would spend the rest of the night in her room - away from everyone who she would rather not speak to.

She would have gone back to the tree by the synagogue, but Stan wouldn't be able to join her until Saturday. Between homework, Boy Scouts, and hanging out with his friends, the quiet - yet sassy - boy didn't have much time to spare. Part of her wished that she had the excuse of a busy schedule, too. Anything that she could further use as an excuse to stay as far away from her aunt and cousin as possible.

Fridays were still pretty open for Kimmy, which is why she and Zelda had made plans a few days prior for a sleep-over. She would already be with her, but said girl, had volleyball practice until five. Which is what led her typical weekday dwellings.

"What are you reading?"

Kimmy glanced up at her brother, his sight focused on what was lying before her. She imagined it might have looked strange, the way she had her area set up. A sketch book bigger than most of the books the siblings had out sat open, used eraser bits scattered around it. Above the sketchbook was a glossy paper back. Her pencil case sat at the top of it to keep it from turning at the most inconvenient moment.

If Ben looked close enough, he'd be able to see the traces of silver shimmering on the tips of her fingers.

"A bird book," she replied, returning to the sketch she was in the middle of. It was of a Belted Kingfisher, a funny little creature with an impressive blue mohawk and a long, chunky beak.

She'd taken up Stan's suggestion about checking out one of the bird books the Derry Library had. There weren't many, about five or so, but it was more than enough for Kimmy to choose from. Out of the ones available, she liked the looks of *Peterson Field Guide to Birds*. The drawings within it looked dainty and colorful, carefully applied to paper for all to see. It was simple enough to use as a reference for her drawings, as well as a way to get to know Stan a bit more. She was hoping to have a few pages done by Saturday so she could surprise him. He seemed to like her drawings, especially the one with the robins she seen the day they met. The thought of his light brown eyes lighting up with excitement motivated her to get as many done as she could.

Kimmy had even gone as far to write the name and at least one fact about each bird once she'd finish drawing them. The first bird she'd looked up was the humming bird Stan liked. She felt her breath catch in her throat the moment she found its page in the book she'd borrowed. The colors were gorgeous, with its autumn reds and its shimmering green feathers. It made her think of a peaceful fall day, like the leaves she saw during the time her family lived in Wisconsin.

"How about you?" she asked, curious about what Ben had chosen.

He held up the hardback he was skimming through; a dark green

hardback titled *The State of Maine*. She should have known. It was a hobby of Ben's to do research about the towns and states they lived in. He liked to get a better understanding about the place they'd call home for who knew how long. A part of them knew that he could read every book that the library had twice and they'd still have no moving date in sight.

"Is it any good?"

Ben shrugged. "Kind of."

Which meant he found it not as interesting as he had hoped. Typical Ben, not wanting to offend anyone - be they real or not. She found it an admirable trait for someone to have, even though they didn't always get straight to the point.

Before they could return to their projects, someone plopped down in the empty seat next to Kimmy.

"Hey, sorry I'm late," said Zelda, tiny beads of water clinging to her forehead. "Coach wanted us to work on our spikes."

"That's, uh, okay," Kimmy replied, cheeks growing warm and tight the longer she and Zelda held eye contact. "I, um, don't mind."

She sent the blushing teen a dazzling smile, making her head spin.

Zelda's attention shifted downwards. "Oh, wow. Did you draw all those?"

Kimmy couldn't think of a response that didn't make her sound like a moron. Instead, she opted for a head nod.

"Can I take a look?" she asked, pointing at the page that had yet to finish.

Part of her wanted to say yes, and she almost did. . . . That is, until she remembered the drawings she'd done of Zelda a few nights back, when she couldn't get her off of her mind.

"No!" Kimmy slammed the sketchbook shut, bending over it protectively.

The drawings weren't inappropriate. But there were enough of them to make any sane person feel concerned. Another part of her didn't want anyone, not even her brother, to lay eyes on them. Kimmy liked having the close-up portraits of Zelda to herself, a fact that she'd prefer to take to her grave.

Kimmy peered holes into the sketchbook while Zelda and Ben looked at her like she was a spastic imbecile.

"O . . . kay. Sorry I asked," was Zelda's response.

Wanting to get this embarrassing moment over with, Kimmy shoved her things into her bag.

Zelda reached out a hand and gripped it around her arm. "Hey, hey, hey, slow down. I didn't mean to upset you."

Kimmy froze, muscles tense from the skin to skin contact. Her sight was drawn to her classmate's long, elegant fingers. She could see the tips of her gnawed fingertips. They had a yellow tint, no doubt from the cigarettes Kimmy had been made aware of the other day. They had been hiding in the girl's bathroom when Zelda offered her a smoke. She'd been surprised at first, seeing someone the same age as her was in possession of a pack of Camels. Kimmy had nearly coughed up a lung after her first and only inhale of cigarette smoke.

You didn't, she wanted to tell her. I'm just so utterly and completely nervous every time you even blink in my direction.

As much as she wanted to let Zelda know everything that crossed her mind, she wasn't sure if she felt the same way. The last thing she needed was for someone to spread around this small-minded town was that the new kid had a crush on a girl. She hadn't even told Ben how she felt things for men and women. The thought of being run out of town terrified her. She could live with society hating her, but her family. . . . Kimmy wouldn't be able to make it without Ben in her life. She needed her sweet baby brother more than anyone else.

"We should, uh, we should get going."

Without waiting for a response, she ruffled Ben's hair and practically

sprinted away. With each step she took, she could feel the heat on her face spread viciously throughout her body. She only stopped when Zelda called out, "You don't even know where I live!"

As if she wasn't already a big enough idiot. . . .

"Guys, I'm home!" Zelda called out once she and Kimmy made their way indoors.

Patches, who had been the first to greet them, kept nudging his wet nose against Zelda's hand. The Coonhound's whines for attention only grew louder the longer he was ignored.

"Hush," she reprimanded the dog, gently shoving his muzzle away from her.

He got the hint that he wouldn't get anywhere, harrumphed, and lazily trotted into the kitchen.

"I like your dog," said Kimmy, watching the rejected hound's tail disappear from sight.

"Yeah, he's great as long as he doesn't get up in everyone's business."

The floors shook from the rapid footsteps of a group of kids who rushed out from what looked like the living room.

"Zelda!" they exclaimed in not-so-perfect unison before tackling the blonde teen.

She grunted from the impact and wrapped her arms around her siblings. "Hey, you troublemakers," she laughed.

"Who's she?" asked a boy who looked to be around the age of seven, pointing a grubby finger in Kimmy's direction. There was some chocolate dried on the corner of his mouth.

This caused the remaining siblings to look her way, drawing an awkward grin from her.

Zelda lifted up the youngest of the bunch, another boy who just

reached his sister's knees. "This is my friend, Kimmy. She's going to be spending the night. Kimmy, these are my siblings. Well, most of them."

She then proceeded to point out who was who to Kimmy. The boy Zelda held was Xavier. The boy who'd asked who she was was Daniel. The girl who had to be ten at the most was Kathy. Zelda's other brother, Levi, was twelve and upstairs in his room.

"Mom say when dinner's ready?" she asked.

Kathy and Daniel shook their heads. Xavier squealed in delight from being turned upside down.

Zelda tilted her head towards the kitchen and called out, "Mom! How much longer?!"

The response they received was an annoyed, "An hour!"

Kimmy looked at Zelda with wide, worried eyes. They'd miss their movie if that were so. This soon turned to confusion when the Waynes giggled like hyperactive hyenas.

"Don't worry," assured Zelda, smiling. "It's a joke. We say that when we don't feel like answering. She'll probably be done in about ten."

"Oh. . . ."

Xavier pulled on his oldest sister's sleeve, thumb in mouth. "Sissy! Sissy!"

"Brother! Brother!" Zelda said, putting his thumb by his side.

"Can we play games?"

"Whatta you wanna play?"

"Old Maid!"

"Sure."

Wiggling like an over-eager puppy, Xavier jumped out of Zelda's

arms. He made haste towards the room he'd been in minutes prior. He'd managed to remember at the last second to grab on to Zelda's hand and drag her to where he wanted to go. Daniel and Kathy rushed ahead, leaving Kimmy behind.

Wisps of her golden hair floated in the air while her blue eyes sparkled with amusement. "You can join us, you know," remarked Zelda, sending her another one of her dazzling smiles.

Kimmy felt her knees weaken at the sight of her. She wanted to tell her how beautiful she was. How she couldn't get her out of her head. How every time Pink Floyd was on the radio she remembered the moment she first laid eyes on her.

But for now, she was happy to nod her head in response before joining them for a semi-intense round of Old Maid.

Dinner with the Wayne family was an entertaining experience. Everything was loud, full of banter, and utensils clanging against plates. It was perhaps the liveliest meal she'd ever been part of.

"Do you like your spaghetti?" asked Mrs. Wayne, blue eyes peering at Kimmy from across the crowded table.

Kimmy twirled the pasta around her fork, watching as a chunky tomato fell from its metal twines. "It's delicious."

The middle-aged woman smiled, her wrinkles even more prominent than they already were.

By looks alone, Kimmy could tell that they were approaching their early fifties. Their blonde hair was streaked with silver and thick glasses rested upon their noses.

"They had me in their thirties," Zelda would remark later on as they made their way to the Capitol Theatre. "They had some trouble for a few years, 'cause my mom was in her thirties when they got married or something like that. They thought that they were infertile."

"And now they have five kids."

Zelda would nod in agreement, a slight smile tugging the corners of her lips. "And now that have five kids."

"We got an invite to Rachel's party today," remarked Mrs. Wayne nonchalant-ly.

Mr. Wayne grunted in response. Kathy, Daniel, and Xavier looked at each other with giddy excitement. Zelda and Levi frowned at this news.

"Really? They want us there?" asked Zelda, brows brought up in confusion.

"Apparently."

Kimmy was curious about what was going on, but kept her mouth shut. Then again, she knew the look of relatives who didn't get along with each other. That was something she'd become an expert on over the past week.

Sensing this, Zelda looked at Kimmy. A look of 'boy are you in for something juice-y' plastered across her usually laid-back exterior. "I'll tell you later," she whispered, soft enough that Kimmy almost missed it.

"Are we gonna go?" asked Kathy, bouncing on the edge of her seat, fork tilted dangerously high above her plate.

"Mind your fork, Kathy," Mrs. Wayne said, getting her to obey almost instantly. "We're not sure yet. Your dad and I will have to talk about it first."

Kathy's face fell, as did Xavier's and Daniel's. Even though she was out of the loop, Kimmy couldn't help but feel awful. She remembered what it was like to love family members who turned out to be shitty people. Honestly, she hoped that it wasn't as serious of an issue as it sounded.

"Kimmy, I heard you recently moved here," said Mr. Wayne, putting salad onto his already too-full plate. "Where did you come from?"

"Houston."

"Oh, I love Houston!" exclaimed Mrs. Wayne, leaning forward on her elbows as her gaze twinkled in the dinning room light. "I use to go there with my college roommates during spring break. We spent a lot of time in the Montrose area. In fact, we got our first tattoos at -"

"Mom," hissed Zelda, sending Mrs. Wayne the 'stop-talking' look.

Mrs. Wayne rolled her eyes. "I'm not the only adult who has a tattoo, Zelda."

"Yes, but your story about where you got it will scar her for life."

"Stop being so dramatic."

"*I'm* being dramatic? You're the one who -"

"Don't you girls have a movie to catch?" interrupted Mr. Wayne, lightly tapping the scuffed watch on his dominate wrist. "You know, with that Tom Bruiser fellow?"

Zelda, snapping out of the argument, noticed how nervous Kimmy and her siblings looked. A deep frown appeared, the inner most corners of her brows pinching inwards. "Yeah. . . yeah, we do." Without checking if her friend was ready to go, Zelda sprung out of her chair and made her way towards the front door. "You coming, Kimmy?"

At the sound of her nickname, she snapped to attention. "Thanks for dinner, Mrs. Wayne."

She merely nodded her head, sight now focused on her meal.

"Don't stay out too late," said Mr. Wayne, pointing his fork in his daughter's direction.

"We won't," responded Zelda, rocking back-and-forth on her feet. "Kimmy! Film!"

Kimmy followed her crush out into the early evening, the heavy door slamming shut behind them.

Since the moment her father took her to see a showing of *True Grit* at the age of four, Kimmy loved going to the movies. For her, it was a magical and sacred experience. She loved being part of a crowd who became silent the moment the lights went out (albeit, this wasn't always the case). She loved the yellow lights lining the aisles and the giant screen placed before her. Add in the occasions where she had money to buy treats from the concessions and you had a mesmerized teen.

She must have drooled when she saw the glittering sign because she heard Zelda chuckle.

"If I knew it was this easy to amuse you, I would have brought you here sooner."

Kimmy felt heat rush up to her cheeks, tearing her attention away from where it had been focused on. Her beaten tennis shoes were easier to look at than the girl standing next to her. "Yeah, um, I, uh, really like movies."

I really like movies? God, I sound like such a loser.

"Especially ones that include that 'Tom Bruiser?'"

Her shoulders began to drop back to their normal height. The idea of berating herself for every stupid thing she said around Zelda was pushed to the back of her mind. "Totally."

After paying for their tickets and grabbing snacks, they made their way to one of the two showing rooms. Kimmy didn't mind, even though it did limit the amount of movies that made their way to Derry. She'd once been to theatres that had one measly room for twenty people to sit in.

"This use to be one giant theatre, but they separated them ten years ago," Zelda explained. "At first, people lost their minds. But once they realized that they weren't limited in the their movie options, they became fine with it."

Kimmy hummed in response before taking a sip from her Coca-Cola Cherry.

They sat down in the middle of the fifth row. This saved Kimmy from standing in the aisle only to look like an idiot as she debated where she wanted to sit. Having settled in, Kimmy tore open her box of Milk Duds and poured the candy into her container of pop corn. As she shook them up, thinking of nothing but her favorite treat, Zelda looked at it with disbelief.

"What are you doing?" she asked, causing Kimmy to stop what she was doing.

"Huh?"

Zelda pointed at her hands. "You put Milk Duds in there."

"Oh. . . ." Kimmy felt the awkwardness begin to pool in her stomach, brain struggling to figure out what to say next. "Yeah. It's, um, It's, um, my favorite."

"Is it good?"

Kimmy nodded her head, holding her food out for Zelda to take. "The popcorn makes the chocolate warm and soft."

Zelda slowly grabbed a small handful and slowly put it inside of her mouth. Kimmy watched with bated breath as she waited for the verdict. In all honestly, she didn't care if others agreed that it was delicious. Another part of her told her that if Zelda spat it out in disgust, it would be the end of the world.

A smile spread across Zelda, a spark on interest going off within her eyes. "This is really good! Why didn't I think to do this before?"

Laughter was the response she was given. Relief pushed aside the worry that had overtaken Kimmy. It patted her on the back for getting away with something she didn't need to be worried about in the first place.

"I know, right?!" she exclaimed, giddy from head-to-toe.

For a moment, her glee was so strong that the first thing that ran across her mind was 'I've got to tell Dad!' But then she remembered with an ache that this wasn't possible.

"You okay," she heard Zelda ask, drawing her out of her melancholic thoughts.

Kimmy jerked to attention, attempting to give her best 'I'm great, how about you?' smile she could muster. To further make sure that they didn't linger on her state of mind, she blurted out: "What's your favorite movie?!"

Stupid, stupid, stupid!

Zelda didn't seem to mind or care that she was sitting next to a clearly nervous teen, for she answered, "I don't know. I really don't have one. I can't remember its name, but that one movie with the guy and that weird as fuck alien baby was cool. You know, the one with the lady who sings through the radiator and the pencil factory?"

"*Eraserhead*?" she asked, hoping that she was wrong in her assumptions.

"Yeah! That's the one. Have you seen it?"

She felt herself freeze at the mention of it, her lips drawing into themselves. Of course her crush's favorite movie would be her least favorite. She took another sip of her drink, face crinkled.

"You hate it, don't you?"

By her laughter, Kimmy could tell that she was more amused than hurt. She couldn't even imagine anything as trivial as this upsetting her. She seemed too cool and laid-back for something like this to upset her day.

"It freaks me out," Kimmy admitted, whispering as if afraid that those around them would gasp in shock. "The boy carrying the main character's head, everything about the baby. . . . I had nightmares for a month after watching it."

"You were scared of the baby?" she asked, eyes wide as if she didn't recognize her friend anymore. "Didn't you feel sorry for it?"

Kimmy tried to shrug it off like it was no big deal that she didn't have a heart. "It's just so. . . terrifying. I don't know. I can't look at it

without feeling like it has evil plans."

"It couldn't help it. It's not like it was asked to be born like that."

"What? In pain?"

"Oh, so you *do* admit that it was writhing in pain the entire time."

Kimmy hid behind the strands of her hair that had managed to escape from her scrunchie. "I never said that it wasn't."

Just as Zelda was about to put in another two cents, the lights dimmed and the screen began to project the trailers. This got her to let off, to not make Kimmy feel like an even shitter person. She sank into her seat, her cheeks burning like they had the most unforgivable sunburn.

Cocktail proved itself to be a cheesy, yet enjoyable, film. Well, from what she'd managed to see, anyway. Kimmy tried to pay attention to what was going on, but that proved to be difficult every now and again. If Zelda moved her hand to grab some more Milk Dud Popcorn, she'd find herself looking at her arm. Whenever she softly laughed, Kimmy found herself smiling like a kid who found out they had a snow day. She even heard Zelda sing "Kokomo" under her breath as the scene played out before them. She couldn't look at her or stop looking at her all at once.

Kimmy wished she could find it in herself to ask Zelda if she felt the same way. If she found it hard to focus and not stumble about like a chicken with its head cut-off? She hated how having a crush on someone turned her into nothing more than a silly school girl.

As the credits rolled, the lights slowly began to brighten. The handful of people around the friends began to make their way towards the exit, chatting away. Kimmy continued to stare ahead, her mind not registering the song that was playing.

"So, what did you think?" Zelda asked, the sound of her voice bringing Kimmy out of whatever trance she'd found herself in.

For a moment, she didn't know how to respond. Their eyes locked,

hazel staring in blue. Kimmy thought of nothing but the feel of Zelda's finger brushing against her own for the past two hours.

"I thought it was. . . good."

Zelda smiled, eye twinkling with some unspoken thing. "Me, too."

"My aunt and mom couldn't agree who got to use the family name," said Zelda, leaning against her bed's headboard.

Pop music softly played from Zelda's beaten boombox, giving the room a comfy feeling. Something that didn't quite match the tone their conversation was in the middle of.

"Family name?"

"The oldest girl of each generation gets to be named Zelda," Zelda began explaining. "My mom's cousin and aunt share the same name as me. So does my cousin, even though I was technically born first. My aunt's pissed that my parents had the audacity to do that. So, there's four living Zeldas in my family."

"Isn't that -"

"Confusing? Surprisingly, not really. The invitation we got is a bit weird, though. We haven't talked to them in years."

Fearing she'd pushed this topic farther than she should have been, Kimmy bounced off of the bed. She made her way towards the boombox, the tips of her feet softly pressing into the carpeted floor.

"How about you? You got any relatives that piss you off?"

She'd hoped that Zelda wouldn't ask. But a part of her had suspected that it was bound to come up the moment Rachel's birthday was brought up.

"My aunt and cousin."

"The ones you live with?"

"Unfortunately," she confirmed, flipping back-and-forth between channels.

A low whistle came from the blonde teen. "Man, that would be my own personal hell."

With a roll of her eyes, Kimmy dryly said, "Gee, thanks for making me feel better,"

She bit her lip. Did she. . . really just say that? A part of her blamed Stan for rubbing off on her.

The sound of feet walking towards her at a less considerate volume filled the air. She felt herself jump in place when the feeling of a hand gently pressed against her shoulder. Strands of blonde hair fell near her face. Their scent of almonds and coconuts invaded her nostrils. Her body stilled, refusing to move as she took in how incredibly close Zelda was - closer than she'd ever been. And she thought sitting next to her was the hardest not to lose her mind over. . . .

"Kimmy?"

". . . Yeah?"

Zelda stopped on a channel that was playing a familiar tune: "Take My Breath Away" by Berlin. It was something that Kimmy hadn't listened to since the year it came out.

"I asked if you liked this song?"

"Uh, yeah. I. . . I do."

For a moment, Kimmy felt a spark pass between them, something alive and burning. Turning her head upwards, she could see that Zelda was incredibly close to her own, noses inches away. She could see a splash of freckles across her nose, how the light shimmered atop her eyelashes. Even her eyes, that had hints of dark gray and silver scattered about, looked different up close.

It was a wonder how she managed not to swoon her way into a dramatic faint.

And then she felt Zelda's fingers slowly run up and down her arm. They were pressed just deep enough for Kimmy to know of their presence. Beads of sweat formed beneath her hairline. She felt her heart pound against her chest as the hands of her crush wrapped themselves around hers. This. . . this isn't what girls who were friends acted around each other. . . right? Was she imagining this because she wanted Zelda to like her, too, or was it as real as she thought it was?

That's when Zelda began to slowly move her head downwards. . . towards Kimmy.

When she dared to close her eyes, ready for their lips to connect, someone loudly knocked. Kimmy's back roughly hit the table behind her, shooting a slight wave of discomfort up her spine. The trinkets atop it frantically shook, a few even going as far to tumble onto the floor.

Zelda stood close to the center of her room, rubbing her fingers around her eyes as if trying to restrain herself from screaming herself horse. "Yeah?"

Not a moment later, Mrs. Wayne stood before them in a fluffy pink robe and matching slippers. A cigarette was held between two of her finger, its scent billowing its way into the bedroom. "You girls heading to bed soon?" she asked, her tone hinting that they should consider doing so. Kimmy managed to catch a glimpse of the time and was surprised to see that it was nearing 10:30.

The much more put-together girl rolled her eyes. "Okay. We'll shut-up. Good-night, Mom."

Mrs. Wayne's focus landed on Kimmy, who hadn't dared to move from where she sat. "Need anything before lights out?" she asked as kindly as she could care to muster.

"No. Thank you, Mrs. Wayne."

With a nod and a final 'get to bed' glare aimed at her daughter, Mrs. Wayne closed the door and left the two alone. For a moment, they were silent, Terri Nunn's voice reaching the end of the song. Kimmy

had no idea what to do, what to say. How did you break the ice and ask if they were going to try to kiss again? Did she even want it anymore, let alone have meant it in the first place?

"Hey, Kimmy -"

Said teen shot up, back straight and blurry gaze focused on anything but Zelda's face. "Be right back," she said in one breath, grabbing her backpack on the way out.

She didn't stop until she'd reached the safety of the bathroom. Her backpack was hugged tightly against her chest, eyes shut tight. Tears of frustration fell down her cheeks, her mind trying to process what the fuck had just happened.

As luck would have it, the minute her thoughts allowed her to sleep, a huge crack of thunder shocked her awake. Kimmy felt her body begin to tremble the second she was able to register what was going on.

A rainstorm, heavy and unforgiving, was accompanied by a boisterous chorus of lighting. Though it had rained off-and-on during her first week in the small town of Derry, it had yet to do something like this. Of course it would be the night she was away from her brother, somewhere where no one knew how to calm her down. This. . . this was -

She yelped when a hateful crack and bright flash of light found its way through the closed curtains. Without thinking, Kimmy buried herself deep beneath the cover's of her friend's bed. The urge to cry increased with each shaky breath she took. For the first time in months, she began to pray to every force in the universe to make it stop, to make it pass along. When that didn't seem to work, she tried to force herself back to sleep, but another bout of thunder made that impossible.

Why couldn't Ben be here? Why couldn't this have waited until another day? Why couldn't she get over her childish fears? Why did things have to suck?

When something warm touched her, she nearly fell out of bed, only to realize that it was a very much asleep Zelda's arm.

How can she sleep through this?!

For a second, she considered shaking her awake. To have someone hold onto her, to make her feel safe. But. . . but what if she thought she was even crazier than she already was? What if she told her to stop being such a pussy and that she needed to get over it? She could only find it in herself to tentatively grab hold of Zelda's hand. It twitched a little in protest but otherwise remained unmoving. As the storm ragged on, Kimmy softly hummed "Take My Breath Away" over and over again, never stopping.

It was only when she heard birds begin to chirp that was able to fall back into a dreamless sleep.

If you would like, let me know what you think of this chapter. I'd love to hear your thoughts :) I'd also like to thank those who have reviewed, followed, and/or favorited this fic.

The next chapter will finally begin *Bright's* journey into the film. But. . . it's going to be a sad one. . . . Oh god, I'm dreading it. Any guesses what it might be?

Until next time, see you later :)

7. Georgie Denbrough

So, I saw *Chapter Two* three times in a span of 24 hours. I had to restrain myself from seeing it a fourth time, considering I only have so much money. . . . I have a problem. I obviously liked it enough to do so, but I thought that *Chapter One* was better. I loved seeing the adult cast, as well as the flashbacks with the kid cast. Not going to spoil anything, but I will say that it was missing something? I have no idea what, but I think it would have been even more amazing if it had it. If you'd like to hear my thoughts that enter spoiler territory, feel free to message me.

Anyway. . . .

This takes place about two weeks after the previous chapter. There's also a slight spoiler for *Chapter Two*. It's not too noticeable, but read with caution if you have yet to see the second film.

As you can see by the chapter's title, we have entered that unfortunate scene. Be prepared for the death of a child, as well as mentions of blood and amputation.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Like any normal Sunday morning, Georgie awoke to the sound of rain and his mother's piano. He didn't think much of it at first, dismissing Derry's typical weather. But that soon changed to boredom when his father informed him that it wouldn't let up for quite some time.

"Billy!" he called out as he rushed into his brother's room. "Billy!"

His big brother was sitting on his bed, in the middle of rubbing his eyes awake. He jerked his head in Georgie's direction, gaze glossy and red. "What's wrong, G. . . Georgie?"

Georgie plopped himself in front of Bill, folding his legs before he looked at him, dejectedly. "It's raining."

"S. . . so?"

"I'm board!" An idea popped into his head, causing him to wiggle in place as his gaze began to twinkle with excitement. "Will you play with me?"

"G. . . Georgie -"

"*Please*, Bill? Please, please, *please*?"

A sigh, the kind their dad had given him when he asked the same question before being told to ask his brother, left Bill. "I can't."

Georgie's lips, still tinted from the juice he'd sipped minutes prior, fell downwards. "Why not?"

If Georgie had been a few years older, he would have seen the brief moment of panic flash across Bill's face. But he hadn't. Perhaps he would have pointed this out, asked what was wrong, if he did. Instead, he repeated, "Why not, Bill?"

"B. . . because I'm s. . . not felling well."

Disappointment turned into concern, causing Georgie to shift even closer to Bill. "Are you going to be okay?"

"I will if you let me s. . . sleep," assured Bill, going to pull his duvet closer to his chest only to have it hardly move an inch. "We can play s. . . some other time."

Even though he did want Bill to get better, he couldn't help but feel sad that he had to entertain himself some other way.

"Why don't you go outside? I can make you a paper b. . . boat. You could race it."

The thought of his big brother making him a new toy turned his frown upside down. An imagine of it splashing down the street came to mind, making him eager to get outside. . . . only to remember the rule that his parents would never let him break.

"Mom and Dad'll say no."

It was true. He wasn't allowed to go outside without his parents or Bill. If he wanted to play in the front yard, one of his parents would need to watch him from the living room window or the porch. But his mom was in the middle of playing piano and wouldn't stop until it was time for lunch. That was hours away, and Georgie couldn't stand to wait that long.

"Don't tell them, then."

Georgie looked at Bill as if he'd suggested that he break their mom's favorite teapot. "They'll be mad at me," he said in a near whisper, as if there was someone listening to them just outside the closed door.

"No they won't."

Before Georgie could protest again, Bill got up and began searching for something. One by one, he gathered the supplies he would need to make a paper boat. He had a sketchbook, tape, pens, and even scissors in-case he needed them. He shooed Georgie off the bed, placing his craft gear on top of it once he did as he was told. While Bill carefully made the little object, Georgie peered outside the window. A light fog had coated some of it, something that he used to draw a smiley face.

"Sure I won't get in trouble, Bill?" he asked for the thousandth time, peering at his sibling with worry.

"Don't be such a w. . . wuss. I'd come with you if I weren't -" a loud, dry cough interrupted him - "dying," he finished, giving Georgie a pitiful look.

Now it was Georgie's turn to sigh at how silly his brother was acting. "You're not dying!"

"You didn't s. . . see the vomit that was coming out of my nose last night?" Bill responded with a tone that sounded like he was offended.

"That's disgusting," Georgie said, not particularly remembering this. (Perhaps it had happened after he had gone to bed?)

"Okay. Go get the wax."

His little heart felt as if it had skipped a beat at the mention of what he'd hoped he had heard incorrectly. "In the cellar?"

"You want it to f. . . float, don't you?"

He wanted to tell Bill to do it instead, that he could wait for him while he fetched it. But that wouldn't have been fair to make him get up, him being sick and all. Considering that Bill could tell him he wouldn't be getting his paper boat after all, he knew he wouldn't win. If only he could make one himself, but he didn't know how. Bill had teased him at first about how bad his attempts at making them were. When he saw how much Georgie's lip would quiver, he'd stopped and offered to make him as many paper boats as he wanted.

There was also the fact that the water would turn it into a white puddle of goop if it didn't get a coating of wax. . . .

"Fine," he said, defeated.

On his way out, dreading what was soon to come, he grabbed a walkie-talkie on his way out. With a pointed look that told Bill to grab hold of the spare next to his bed, Georgie began to make his way downstairs.

Bill smiled at his brother's retreating form. He would have done it himself, but he knew that Georgie needed to face his fear of their cellar face-on. Their dad would probably tell him a few years from now that he needed to 'man up' and get over it. And then there was that other factor, that one thing that would give him away if he moved too much. . . .

He uncapped his permanent marker, making sure to avoid the black ink that had a tendency to latch onto his skin. While he wrote S.S. Georgie on the side of the paper boat, the drawing on his window faded away into nothingness.

Georgie began to regret wanting that paper boat the moment the cellar door stared him down. Thoughts of telling Bill that they were out of wax, that he was fine with the wear and tear it would no doubt

endure. But the look of disappointment was bound to give him gave him pushed him to continue onwards.

His breathing was heavy, stuffing his ears, as he peered unsurely down the creaking stairs. He hated walking on them because he always felt like there was a monster hiding underneath. The screech of his walkie-talkie shocked him back to reality.

"*Georgie. Hurry up,*" Bill said, voice impatiently crackling though the speaker.

The seven-year-old boy pressed his body against the wall that held the light switch. Even though it didn't get rid of his fear, the lights helped make facing the basement a slightly more easier feat. . . . Only to find that it wasn't working. He clicked it a few more times before giving up. If he wanted his new toy, he needed to act fast.

"Okay. I'm brave," he whispered to himself, pressing his clammy palms against the doorframe.

He took one step at a time, testing to see if he was right about the monster. When nothing happened, he'd continue forward, stopping once he reached the bottom. The darkness that surrounded him was only broken by faint streams light from outside. It wasn't much, but it did allow him to see the layout of the dank room.

"Where's the wax?" he asked no one in particular as he scanned the shelf of knickknacks and spare supplies. "There's the wax," he said in relief once he spotted the familiar shape of the Gulf Wax box.

Ready to leave, and distrusting of the carving of an old woman he'd found behind the wax, Georgie turned. . . only to see a pair of faint, yellow balls of light peering at him. The boy whimpered, clutching the box of wax close to his chest. It was watching him, waiting for him.

The monster!

Quickly, he grabbed a flash light and shakily clicked it on, pointing it in the direction of the orbs. . . only to find that it was a couple of glass balls.

Thunder clapped in the distance, startling Georgie.

"This is bad! Oh, Jeez!" he exclaimed, making a mad dash for the kitchen.

He didn't bother to close the door behind him, nor did he hear the faint sound of giddy laughter that answered him.

"Alright. There you go. S. . . she's already, Captain," announced Bill.

"She?" asked Georgie, taking the newly sealed toy that had been held out to him.

"You always call b. . . boats 'she,'" Bill said, smiling.

Georgie returned it with a smile of his own. "She," he said, letting it leave his tongue as if he had been given the most important information he'd ever been told. "Thanks, Billy." He wrapped his arms around his brother's neck, leaning into him. It wasn't often that the two hugged. Usually one of them would shove the other off, telling them to stop or get lost. But this wasn't one of those times. Georgie relished the hug, happy that he'd been nice enough to do it in the first place.

Giggles escaped him when Bill tickled his stomach. Grabbing the walkie-talkie he'd placed on Bill's desk, Georgie merrily skipped away.

"See you later!" he called over his shoulder.

After slipping on his rain gear, Georgie quietly made his way outdoors. At the end of their driveway, he turned and waved at Bill's window, sending a giant, enthusiastic smile his way. His brother peered down at him, wearing an expression that looked like concern.

"*Be careful*," Bill's voice reminded through the static-y speaker.

And then he was off, chasing the S.S. Georgie as she made her way down the stream of water that hugged the cracked curbs.

"What a nice boat," the strange clown purred. "Do you want it back?"

Georgie stared at the clown in the sewer, too unsure to look away and longing to get the S.S. Georgie back. He hadn't meant for her to get away, but she had been too fast. He had run as fast as he could, but she had disappeared into the sewer drain. That's when the clown appeared. At first, he thought the eyes peering up at him were the same ones he'd seen in the cellar. When the clown stepped into the light, he realized that they were actually a friendly blue.

"Um, yes, please," he said, shakily.

"You look like a nice boy," the clown whispered. "I bet you have a lot of friends."

"Three, but my brother's my best-est."

"Where is he?" the clown asked, tilting his head sideways.

"In bed. Sick."

The clown smiled, his smooth buckteeth gleaming. "I bet I could cheer him up. I'll give him a balloon."

Something told Georgie that something was wrong, that he should leave. But his innocence - one that still had enough optimism to face the day with a giant smile - won, keeping him in place.

"Do you want a balloon, too, Georgie?"

"I'm not suppose to take stuff from strangers," he informed the clown.

"Oh, well, I'm Pennywise the Dancing Clown!" the clown said, shaking his head - bells jingling in his bright orange hair as he did so.

"Pennywise?" "Yes?" "Meet Georgie." "Georgie, meet Pennywise."

Georgie chuckled at the way the clown said this, as if he were a grown-up and a child all at once - both serious and funny.

"Now we aren't strangers, are we?"

"What are you doing in the sewer?"

"A storm blew me away. Blew the whole circus away," Pennywise chuckled. "Can you smell the circus, Georgie?"

A puff of wind met Georgie's nose. At first, he could faintly smell things. But the scent of moist grass, animal dung, and treats grew stronger with each sniff the young boy took. It made him want to lean closer to see if there really was a whole circus down there.

"There's peanuts, cotton candy, hot dogs, and. . . ?"

That's when it hit him. The strongest of all the scents. His most favorite snack, buttery and salty and crunchy: "Popcorn?"

"Popcorn!" confirmed Pennywise. "Is that your favorite?"

"Uh-huh!"

"Mine, too," Pennywise excitedly laughed. "Because they *pop!* *Pop*, *pop*, *pop!*"

The two giggled, as if one of them had told the other the funniest joke, exchanging '*pop*'s back-and-forth. . . . Until Pennywise abruptly stopped. Georgie watched with unease as the clown lowly growled, like the neighbor's dog did to warn him to leave him be. But the eyes. . . the eyes he had thought to be friendly looking became distant, one of them shifting off to the side. He had a look. . . a look of want in his eyes. That was enough to remind Georgie that he shouldn't be here, that not every person he met was always nice.

"Um," he whimpered, struggling for something to say that wouldn't offend the clown. "I should get going."

And he was about to before Pennywise said, "Oh! Without your boat?" The S.S. Georgie came back into view, tempting him to get it back. "You don't want to lose it, Georgie. Bill's gonna kill you."

It was that reminder, that sinking feeling of making Bill mad, that glued the boy in place. There was no way he could leave now, knowing that he had a chance to make sure this didn't happen.

He'd been so focused on this that he failed to notice how wide and menacing Pennywise's smile had become.

"Here. Take it. Take it, Georgie," the clown growled.

Against his better judgment, he inched forward, reaching his hand into the sewer drain.

It shouldn't have been that much of a surprise when Zelda's mom forced her to walk the dog in the pouring rain. Then again, when didn't she make her do something she rather wouldn't? Had it been somewhat sunny, she would have put up less of a fuss. Apparently, her mom didn't care that Patches' fur would soon smell disgusting. Knowing her luck, Zelda would have to deal with this, too.

Patches didn't seem to mind getting wet, though. As long as he wasn't forced into a bathtub, he was more than happy to romp around in grimy puddles to his heart's content. And so the Coonhound gladly led his owner down the route they usually took, lightly panting. Beneath her umbrella, one that hardly failed at keeping her dry, Zelda managed to light a cigarette. The pungent scent greeted her before the smoke lazily let itself out into the gray morning. The nice thing about dogs was that they couldn't rat you out, nor did they know of the rules that she had to follow.

"Hey, get going," she warned Patches when he stopped to glare at a tabby cat who'd locked eyes with him.

With a few more firm tugs of the leash, and a low whimper of disappointment, the hound complied.

"Good boy, Patches," she said, scratching one of his floppy ears.

He leaned into her touch before sneezing from the smoke that had tickled his nostrils.

Just when she thought that they were good to go, Patches jerked them to a stop the moment they reached the corner. Zelda nearly fell, managing to regain her balance before things got nasty.

"Patches!" she hissed. "Keep -"

The Coonhound had his ears drawn back, hackles raised, teeth bared. He gave low, warning growl, attention fully focused on something,

never wavering. She followed his line of sight until it landed on a kid wearing a bright, yellow jacket. They were trying to lean into the sewer drain, one of their tiny hands bracing itself on the top of it.

"Hey, kid! What are you doing?!" she called out, starting forward to pull them out. The last thing they needed was for them to fall in. Who knows how badly they would hurt themselves or how long it would take to get them out?

At the sound of her voice, they pulled their head back out. It was a boy who lived down the street from her - Georgie Denbrough, she believed. From the times she'd seen him running around his yard, he seemed like a sweet, loving kid. He looked at her with wide eyes full of apprehension. When he opened his mouth to respond, the sickening sound of bone loudly snapping hit her full force. Screams of bloody murder followed, causing the poor boy to fall backwards.

Zelda let go of Patches' leash and rushed forwards. She watched as he attempted to crawl away, streaks of scarlet leaving his arm. She didn't realize that it was coming from where his arm use to be until she was crouched in front of him.

"Oh, god," she said after gasping in horror. She could feel his other arm weakly grab onto her, tears of fear falling down his now incredibly pale face.

"Help me!" Georgie cried. "He's gonna get me!"

"Who?" she asked.

"The clown! The clown!"

The teen gripped onto his shoulders and began to pull him towards her. She needed to get him to the nearest house, to take him to the hospital before he lost too much blood. "Hold on, kid. I'll get you -"

A strong force pulled them forward. Patches barked in panic as he watched helplessly from where he'd been left.

Zelda planted her feet at the top of the sewer drain, hands tightly holding onto Georgie's wrist. Her biceps twitched with aching effort, begging her to let them relax. But she couldn't. She *wouldn't*.

Something was trying to take him, and she sure as hell wasn't going to let that happen.

"Don't let go," Georgie begged, brown eyes shimmering with complete and utter terror.

All she could do was grunt, "Hold. On."

That's when she saw *IT*, looking at her with flaming, yellow-red eyes. *IT* smiled at her - wide and filled with bloodied, sharp teeth - as drool messily left *IT*'s lips. The way *IT* looked at her, unblinking, was of starvation and amusement. *IT* chortled, shaking *IT*'s head at her like she was a child who couldn't fully comprehend what was going on.

What the fuck is that thing?!

"It's time for little Georgie to float," *IT* sang in a sickly sweet tone. "And soon enough, you'll float, too!"

IT gave a vicious snarl and a mighty tug, causing Zelda to lose the hold she had on Georgie. As she fell back, butt roughly hitting the pavement, she heard him cry out: "BILLY!"

Patches' yips filled the grim mid-morning air, drawing people outdoors. Some kindly neighbors asked if she was alright, one going as far to call 911 when she proved to be unresponsive. She couldn't stop staring at what was left of the boy's blood as it joined the waste of Derry.

Poor Georgie :(As you can imagine, Zelda feels incredibly guilty that she wasn't able to save him. But, I mean, that's kind of hard to do when the monster you face is an all-powerful being.

I'm hoping that I continue to be on the role that I am, so I expect to see more chapters soon!

Until next time, see you later :)

8. Chapter 5

Is this a strong chapter? Probably not. Am I happy with it? Yeah, kind of. If only that asshole living in my brain stopped telling me everything I write looks like shit. . . . I see putting my work out there as a way of giving it the middle finger. So, basically, fuck that guy.

A bit random, but have any of you heard about the *IT* Frappuccino? It's a vanilla bean Frappuccino with strawberry purée. From what I've read, it sounds like it's more of a secret menu item. Either way, I'm going to try and go to Starbucks sometime this week.

I've also come across an AU comic where Pennywise turns good. You can find it on Tumblr under turnedgoodaucomic. It's an amazing read! I highly recommend checking it out.

Disclaimer: I don't own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Officer Wilcox looked at the rattled girl before him, head down and knees brought up to her chest. She was biting the tip of one of her thumbs, eyes focused on something that he couldn't see.

"Can you tell us what happened?" asked Officer Lang, her voice calm and certain.

Normally, they wouldn't have checked in on someone who had been in shock for the past few hours. They'd been told that when she'd found her voice again, she kept mumbling a name: Georgie. They would have shrugged it off, wouldn't have gone in to see someone who wasn't in the best state of mind. But that was before they received a frantic call from the Denbroughs. They claimed that their youngest son, George - or Georgie, as he was more affectionately known - was missing.

The girl, Zelda Wayne, didn't look up as she evenly said, "I told you. Someone pulled him into the sewer drain."

Officer Wilcox felt. . . doubtful, to say the least. Who in their right mind would traverse the sewers of Derry? Not even the rats were willing to touch such a place with a ten foot pole.

"And by someone, you mean -"

"Exactly what it sounds like," she snapped, teeth sinking into her skin hard enough to almost draw blood.

"Yes, but what you claim sounds a bit far-fetched," began Officer Wilcox. "That a man in the sewers somehow managed to cut off George's arm, threatened you, and then pulled him in."

Zelda didn't say anything, only continued to glare at the table sitting before them. She hadn't even so much as grabbed the bottle of water that had been set out for her.

"Now, doesn't that sound a bit improbable to you, Miss Wayne?"

"I'm not lying," she said, tone on the verge of shaking. "I wouldn't."

"If what you are saying is true, did you manage to get a good look at the person who took George Denbrough?"

A look of fear, one that sucked the life out of her flesh, washed over her. Any movement she'd made seconds prior came to an abrupt stop. To Officer Wilcox, she looked like a marble statue - forever frozen in a state of terror.

"Miss Wayne?" asked Officer Lang.

For a moment, he thought that they wouldn't get anything else out of her, that she'd run dry and would no longer be of any help.

"You won't believe me."

"Trust us, Miss Wayne, we've heard of stranger things," Officer Wilcox promised.

She shook her head, muttering something beneath her breath.

"Speak louder, please."

After a sharp inhale of air, she said something that he would hear again twenty-seven years later: "He was a clown. A motherfucking clown."

The following afternoon, Zelda Wayne was cleared of any suspicion. It was agreed that she had nothing to do with the boy's disappearance, for the other witnesses all claimed that they had seen her struggling to hold onto something. That something being George Denbrough.

"She couldn't have hurt that poor boy," said an elderly woman as she wrapped her shawl tightly around herself. "I saw her walking a dog not long before. . . well, before *that* happened."

There had been no weapon, no evidence that she had brought harm to him. Even if she did by some chance have something to do with his disappearance, they couldn't pin it on her.

And then there was that. . . that clown, or so she had said. Even if there was some truth in it, there was something about it that put the entire police department on edge. It was as if this wasn't the first, nor the last, time that terrible things would happen to the children of Derry. It was as if a voice warned them to drop any plans they might have had to further investigate this particular case. Like the Wayne girl had told Officers Wilcox and Lang: no one would believe them, anyway.

They told George's family that he must have fallen into the sewers while trying to grab hold of something. That Zelda had attempted to help him but lost her grip on him. That he'd been swept away by a rush of water, never to be seen again.

It was enough to please the higher ups, to ease their conscience when it came to brushing the truth under the rug.

The last thing everyone needed was to fear something that couldn't possibly exist. . . .

There were two people who couldn't let Georgie's disappearance go.

One refused to accept that he would most-likely never see his little brother again. The other couldn't shake away the need to know what the hell was lurking below the small-minded town.

Unbeknownst to either of them, the answers they were looking for had a hefty cost. It was a terrible truth they wouldn't discover until it was too late to turn back.

Something was wrong. Kimmy could tell by how Zelda glanced around her as if afraid someone was lurking in the shadows. She could tell by how her eyes would glaze over as Kimmy told her about the comics she'd been reading. She could tell by the one worded answers she'd give, pushing things along at a much faster pace than normal.

At first, she'd thought this was her way of dealing with what happened to George Denbrough. Or that she was still shaken from the time the police had interviewed her. She understood how that must have fucked with her. But as the days bled into weeks and weeks into months, Kimmy was beginning to worry. A nasty part of her told her that she shouldn't bother spending time with her if all she'd get was mindless nods. It made her feel both guilty and unappreciated all at once.

They were at Debby's Diner one afternoon when she finally found the courage to ask, "Zelda, are you alright?"

With bloodshot eyes that hinted at how troubled she must have felt, Zelda looked at Kimmy. Her fingers kept tearing slits into the napkin she held, bits of it dropping on the menu sitting before her. They had yet to order anything, save for the two waters they'd asked for moments ago. Knowing the state of her mind, Kimmy had a feeling that Zelda would most-likely order nothing at all.

"Why do you wanna know?" she asked, deep voice scratchier than usual.

"Because I. . . ." Kimmy took a deep breath, hands squeezing themselves together. "I'm worried about you."

Zelda continued to peer at Kimmy, the sadness in her blue gaze gradually growing. "Don't."

Kimmy's eyes widened at this, jaw threatening to drop to the ground. Of all the things she expected to hear, this wasn't one of them.

"What?"

"You don't need to worry about me, Kimmy. I'm fine. Really, I am."

Every single thing that had happened since September rushed to the front of her mind. How the cigarettes Zelda carried in her denim jacket were no longer there. How she'd spent less and less time with her outside of school. How she was more reserved than normal. It had gotten to the point where Kimmy had begun to suspect that she was falling into a deep depression. It made her want to scream at Zelda, to shake some sense into her, to cuss her out for lying to her.

She was more than ready to let Zelda have it. Kimmy didn't even know that her anger wasn't as strong as she thought it was until she softly stated, "No, you're not."

With a roll of her eyes, Zelda responded dryly, "Well, sorry that you think that way."

"Fuck you, Zelda," she hissed. "Seriously, fuck you."

"*Shh!*" Zelda said, reaching across the table to place some of her fingers over Kimmy's mouth. "Keep your voice down."

"Don't tell me what to do!"

"Is everything alright over here?" asked the annoyed voice of their waitress as she glared down at the teens.

"Yeah, we're fine. Thanks," Zelda said, earning a slight sigh of aggravation from their waitress. "Give us a second."

The waitress looked like she wanted to say something rude in return. Instead, she nodded her head before stomping towards the kitchen. It was then that Kimmy felt someone staring heated daggers into the back of her neck. She peeked as discreetly as possible at the people

around her. Though there weren't many other diners, the few that were there gave her looks of 'what the hell is her problem?' or 'how *dare* she say such a thing in a family establishment.'

Before she could figure out what to do with this information, Zelda pulled her out of their booth. "Come on," she mumbled. "Before you make an even bigger scene."

Anger boiled beneath her skin, threatening to burst at any moment. All she could see was a narrow tunnel surrounded by a blinding red. Zelda stood at the end of it, never letting go of Kimmy's wrist until they found themselves in an alleyway.

She tore her arm back, lips drawn into a snarl as she rubbed the place Zelda's fingertips had pressed into. For what felt like an eternity, the two of them wordlessly dared the other to go first. But the longer they stood, the more Kimmy's anger ebbed away. She was eventually left somewhere between frustrated and hurt, unsure of what to do next.

"Well, go on," Zelda huffed, blowing a strand of blonde hair out of her flushed face. "Talk."

And so Kimmy, who couldn't find the energy to yell anymore, confessed, "I'm scared that you're drifting away. You hardly talk anymore, and I heard from one of your teammates that you've been skipping practice."

The confession hung between them. It eventually drew some form of recognition from the depths of Zelda's exhausted eyes.

Then, as if someone had unlocked a stubborn door, Zelda tenderly reached out a hand. Kimmy stared at it, unsure, before tentatively accepting it.

A red cover bridge loomed before the teens. It didn't look new by any means, nor did it look like it was falling apart. Kimmy remembered crossing it back in September, when her mom drove them to their new home. Unless it was to finally leave Derry, she hadn't seen any reason to come back.

"Why are we here?" she asked, never taking her eyes off of it.

Stopping by a wooden fence, Kimmy noticed initials and hearts carved into them. Some were fairly recent while others looked to be at least a decade old. Zelda stepped forward, thumping her way across the bridge.

"Come on," she called over her shoulder, voice echoing behind her.

Kimmy watched as she knelt down at the other end. She pulled out what looked like a Swiss Army knife and dug its sharp edge into the wood.

"What are you doing?!" she asked, darting forward as if that would be enough to get her to stop.

Standing behind Zelda, nervous of being found, she caught a glimpse of other carvings. Few in comparison to other sections, but enough to be considered a cluster.

"What's it look like, silly?" Zelda responded, laughter flowing between each word she spoke.

Sure enough, a small 'Z' stared back at her, deep and fresh and smelling of dusty wood. Kimmy watched as Zelda began to carve an even smaller '+' When she'd finished, she stood. Carefully, on baited breath, Zelda held the knife out. There was a look of hope in her blue gaze, one that Kimmy felt rush to the tips of her toes. It was the first time she had ever seen her crush like this. But it wasn't. Not really. She just hadn't seen it since:

The sleepover.

Images of the almost moment, one charged with tension and want, flashed before her. The feel of Zelda's fingers, the way her head felt like it was going to explode. It was something that could have been, but had passed them by. All because Kimmy had freaked out before she could truly face it.

Without looking away from her, Kimmy reached out to take the knife. She bent down, facing the letters that confirmed every pang of longing, of every detailed sketch of her she'd put to paper.

Soon, an equally small 'K' found its place beside the others, a feeling of warmth spreading through her. Cool hands gently squeezed Kimmy's shoulders before they turned her around. Standing, she found a smiling Zelda - though it wasn't quite the same as the ones she used to wear. She took the knife from Kimmy, sliding it back into her jacket once it had been retracted.

"I'm not going anywhere," she promised, intertwining her fingers with Kimmy's. "Not really."

Slowly, waiting for Kimmy to let her, Zelda brought her lips closer to Kimmy's. Her ears pounded within her head, encouraging her to act on what she'd never thought would come to pass. With a dreamy nod of her head, and a whispered "Yes," they shared a gentle, lingering kiss. Kimmy sank into it, bringing her arms up to wrap themselves around Zelda's shoulders. She could feel her back press against the bridge and Zelda's caress upon her waist. Her eyelids fluttered, like a butterfly experiencing its first flight.

Before she knew it, Zelda pulled away, and they both took in the crisp, autumn air. She could feel her lips beginning to swell at the same time she noticed how vibrant and plump Zelda's had become.

"So, you're -"

"Gay. You?"

"Bisexual."

A soft laugh, the first she'd heard from her crush in weeks, answered her. "I *knew* you had the hots for me."

A furious blush encased Kimmy, sending her brain into a tizzy. "Well, I, uh. You. . . you -" Kimmy groaned, leaning her head onto Zelda's shoulder.

Strands of her hair began to move, hovering above her, twirling in circles, as Zelda said, "It's hard living in Derry. No one will let you be yourself if you're something they can't stand."

As if remembering where they were, the two simultaneously broke apart. Zelda rubbed the back of her neck, rolling it every now and

again, while Kimmy pulled at her sweater's sleeve.

"We should. . . we should get going," Kimmy finally said, shifting from one foot to the other.

"Yeah. We should."

They walked back to the heart of Derry in silence. The backs of their hands brushed together, the only thing they really needed to say. It was when they parted ways that they shared a knowing grin. Nothing, they agreed in that fleeting moment, would be the same.

Later that night, Kimmy woke, gasping for air. A sinking feeling, one that was like a pestering creature, weighed down her stomach. For a second, she thought she was going to puke, bringing up a clammy palm to press against her trembling lips. Worriedly, she scanned her bedroom. A sliver of moonlight shone through the closed curtains, illuminating Ben's body. The sound of his deep, slow breaths began to sooth her.

She couldn't remember if she had dreamed or not. For all she knew, it had been of complete darkness - one that was filled with a never ending silence. But something. . . something had scared her, jolting her back to reality. It was as if she had fallen out of bed, her mind waking her in time to brace for an uncomfortable landing. What that was, she wasn't sure. As she laid back upon her pillow, eyes shut tight, the reason why rapidly came to her: Zelda was in trouble. Why, she wasn't certain.

Though pressing, she knew there wasn't much that she could do. Before she drifted back to sleep, she made a mental note to call her first thing in the morning. She never did, for at that point it had become more of an unpleasant dream that she couldn't quite recall.

It was only when she passed Keen's Pharmacy that she remembered. With knees that felt as if they were made of melting Jell-O, Kimmy read the poster crookedly taped to the window:

MISSING:

ZELDA WAYNE

15 Years Old

Last Seen: November 22

Description: Date of Birth: September 3, 1974 Female 15yrs. 60 inches

Weight 105 Blonde Hair Blue Eyes Wearing Denim Jacket, AC/DC T-shirt, Blue Jeans, Black Boots

Persons Having Information

Are Requested to Call

(207) 174-6913

A sense of dread flowed through her, leaving guilt and a need to run as far away from Derry as she could in its wake. The girl who made Kimmy's world feel a little more stable was somewhere she could not follow. Or so she had thought. . . .

Okay, so I may be the only one who died during the kissing bridge scene, but I'm honestly fine with that. If you loved it, too, then that's great! I'm super excited to get back into the film again, seeing as most of the Losers will make an appearance in the next chapter.

Speaking of the Losers, I heard that we were robbed of more Mike scenes in *Chapter Two*. They probably cut them out to not go over three hours, but come on! We couldn't have gotten at least one of them? I'm hoping that we'll see them in the supercut, whenever that comes out. Hopefully we won't have to wait more than a couple years.

Until next time, see you later :)

9. Chapter 6

Oh, wow. This took far longer to write than I thought. I'm pretty sure this is the longest chapter now, which I didn't expect to happen. It was going to be longer, but I decided that it would flow better if I gave it its own chapter. And then there was last night's editing fiasco. The editing site I use decided to delete a paragraph that I almost didn't catch and had to re-edit. I was tempted to throw my laptop in the trash and give up on writing all together. A bit dramatic, but your brain tends to be rather dramatic when tired. But, hey, I was on a roll, at least. I feel like I'm starting to get excited about what's to come, thus making everything a bit less stressful.

And then there was that tremendous amount of self-doubt that hit me the other day. Fuck, that sucked. I kept staring at this chapter, thinking how much it sucked and how out of character it was. (I now don't think it is, but I could be wrong.) Thankfully it went away last night. God, that was far from a fun time.

On a slightly more positive note, Kimmy is finally going to interact with more of the Losers! She won't meet Beverly or Mike for another few chapters, but it should happen soon. I can't wait for Richie and Kimmy to become friends because I love their friendship. That's one of the things I'm most excited to write more about, to be honest.

Trigger Warnings: Bullying, fat-shaming, implied slurs, and use of the 'd' slur.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

November 23rd, 1988

Ben could see the shape of his sister's body buried beneath her duvet. Since the previous afternoon, she had hidden away in their room. She never left, opting to remain unmoving from where she'd plopped down upon. He'd only seen her like this one other time. When their father had died, she hardly talked to anyone for weeks, including

him. Losing his dad had been hard, but not as much as trying to reach out to Kimmy so he didn't have to deal with his pain on his own.

Please don't leave me, he wanted to beg on the day of their father's funeral. *Please don't make me go through this alone*.

"Hey, Kimmy?" Ben asked, kneeling down beside his sister's bed. He could see the shape of her body beneath her covers, unmoving since the previous afternoon. "Kims?"

For a lingering moment, one that felt as if it had surpassed an eternity, Ben thought he'd lost her. That she wouldn't come up for air until whatever was churning inside her had run its course. He would be lying if he said he wasn't worried about her. It was the thought of her going back to that dark place that made him desperate to reach out to her. To be there for her in anyone that he could.

He almost sighed in relief when she responded with a quiet, "Mmm?"

"Do you. . . do you want me to stay?"

They returned to silence. It got to the point where the air conditioner's hums was the only thing he heard for a considerable amount of time. Still, he waited for her to say something, to make some kind of move.

His patience was rewarded with her rolling over to face him, her hazel eyes sadly peeking out at him. That was enough for him to sit at the foot of her bed, body pressing against her bent knees.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, voice on the verge of tears.

"It's okay," he assured her, gently squeezing her knee. "It's okay."

The siblings say in silence for the rest of the day. When Ben heard her shallow breaths, he moved to his own bed. He only stopped watching her when he, too, fell into a dreamless sleep.

Thanksgiving Day, 1988

The sound of timid knocking echoed through the hallway as Arlene attempted to reach out to Kimmy. At first she hadn't been too worried, thinking that her daughter would come down on today of all days. The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was an event that she refused to miss in the past. She'd even make a show of setting an alarm to make sure she didn't sleep through it. But when it was halfway over, she knew that something was wrong.

"She's not a child anymore, Arlene," her sister had condescendingly pointed out. *"I'm quite pleased that she's mature in at least one aspect of her life."*

But she never misses it, she wanted to tell Jean. *It's her favorite tradition.*

"Kimmy? Sweetheart? Please, come out," softly called her mom.

Someone making their way to the door ignited the hope that she'd finally managed to get through to her. They had hardly talked since moving to Derry. It only seemed to put a further strain on their already fairly distant relationship.

To her disappointment, Ben was the one who responded to her request.

"She's not feeling well," he said, pulling his PJ shirt down from where it had begun to ride up.

"Really? What's wrong?"

When she went to make her way in, Ben made sure that only a sliver of the door was open. He gave her an apologetic look, one that she knew all too well.

She doesn't want to see me. . . .

"Oh, alright." Trying not to be too hurt by this realization, Arlene gave her son the best smile she could muster. "Try to get her to come down for dinner?"

Yet both of them knew that wouldn't happen unless Jean dragged Kimmy out by her ears. And even that was uncertain.

"I'll try."

Not knowing what else to say, Arleen nodded her head. It was when she dejectedly descended the stairs that a feeling of dread filled her. For the first time since moving, she found herself wondering if deciding to live in Derry was the right thing to do.

Where did I go wrong?

December 1988

Kimmy watched the blurred shadows of snowflakes fall from a gray sky from the comfort of her bed. The light from the streetlamps shone a soft yellow across the floor, capturing what was left of her focus.

The thought of the winter months freezing Zelda', wherever she was, made her stomach churn. If she was stuck somewhere, would someone come across her and bring her home to her family? If some sick fuck kept her locked away, would she be able to get away? Nothing made sense. . . . At least, nothing that brought her to the conclusion that girl she had feelings for was gone forever. . . .

Tears prickled her eyes as a thick wad planted itself in her throat.

Zelda. . . couldn't be dead. . . . She was too wonderful, too laid-back, too rock-and-roll to be gone so soon.

Images of the blonde teen popped into her mind. Zelda standing before her in her denim jacket. Zelda humming along to Joan Jett's "I Hate Myself for Loving You" whenever it played on the radio. Zelda playing tag with her siblings, laughing and rolling around on their front yard. Zelda asking Kimmy if her favorite movie theatre snack was safe for her braces. Zelda smoking in the darkest corners of their school. . .

The pain of losing her father earlier that same year had been a thousand times more painful. It was something that had taken a piece of her with him. She'd refused to leave her room for days, hardly eating a thing. All she could do was draw and draw and draw, pages and pages and pages of things that didn't have rhyme or reason. Later

on, she'd say that it was the only way she could get every negative emotion out of her. This habit of becoming dangerously reclusive would stick with her well into adulthood. But with Zelda. . . a numbness settled upon her, weighing her down where she laid.

She was so caught up in her emotions that she didn't realize she'd begun to silently cry.

January 1989

It didn't take long for Henry and his goons to focus their attention on her. When Zelda was around, there had only been a few instances where they cared to bother them. But that was mostly due to how clever the now missing girl had been when it came to avoiding them. It was as if she had cracked a cryptic code, one that allowed her and anyone close to her to slip under the radar. It was talent that Kimmy hadn't payed much mind to before. But now. . . now she was made painfully aware of what kind of person the infamous bullies were.

The first time they bothered her was in the halls, during passing period. She'd been so focused on making her way to her homeroom that she had failed to notice their snickering.

"*Dyke*," one of them had coughed into their fist, chortles of approval falling it.

Kimmy had almost stopped, stunned. She did her best to ignore whatever else they threw her way as she picked up her pace. If it wasn't for the slur written on her locker later that week, she would have completely forgotten about it. Kimmy stared at it in disbelief for what felt like hours, ears ringing, legs cemented to the tile floor.

It only got worse.

Each passing day, she'd find a new crude addition. Sometimes it was a word, sometimes it was a phrase, and sometimes it was a hardly passable drawing. None the less, the intent was still there: not a single person at Derry High School liked her. And she had a feeling that Henry was the one who initiated this tactic of bullying.

But it was the way he looked at her like he wanted to do unimaginable things to her that sent shivers down her spine. Most of the time she couldn't tell if he wanted to punch her in the face or make-out with her. She hoped that she'd never have to find out. And then there was Patrick. He was someone she knew would go wild in the bullying department if he ever managed to get her alone. There was something about him that felt more disturbing than Henry in some ways. It was like he did not care about the consequences he could face if caught. It was almost like he saw the laws of the universe as something he didn't need to follow, that he was the one in control.

Even if hardly anyone believed she was gay, it still didn't help her make friends. Especially when the rumors about her and Zelda began going around.

That her and Zelda made out in the woods. That they had sex under the bleachers after school. That Kimmy liked to send letters of admiration to the girls in her year. That she had aids. . . . None of them were true. Most knew this, and yet they seemed to prefer to keep their distance just in case.

At first, she was afraid that someone had seen them at the Kissing Bridge or that they noticed their carving. But the more the rumors spread, the more she felt safe in knowing that she was safe in that regard. It still made the rest of her freshman year lonely as hell. She'd watch from the sidelines as girls were asked to the winter dance and everyone but her had a place to sit at lunch. All the while, they'd send suspicious glances her way, whispering to each other as if she weren't even there.

The only ones who got her through it all were Ben and Stan. Her schedule remained the same as it had been before Zelda went missing. It was comforting, having a sense of familiarity to help ease the sting of what the Bowers gang had done. Drawing, reading with Ben, listening to music with Stan as they watched birds the moment it was spring.

It was during the lonely moments that separated her from them that she withdrew into thoughts. They were almost-always filled with lyrics from her favorite songs. She'd hum them beneath her breath,

hoping that this would make the end of the school day come faster.

June 1989

The months passed, bleeding into the next. Holidays came and went, as did some of the seasons. And as the year progressed, the more and more children went missing. In fact, it was a common sight to see a new missing person's poster once a week. It was only towards the end of the spring that a curfew had been put in place. The Derry Police had hoped that this would lessen the amount of missing cases presented to them. Even then, it still didn't work.

Kimmy was all too aware of the absence of her peers, especially those who were much younger than her. Ever since Zelda disappeared, she noticed how things seemed. . . off, to say the least. Like how the adults would conveniently look away whenever kids were in need of her help. How the Bowers and his friends seemed to get away with more shit than they should have. How everyone wasn't as close knit as they claimed. . . . There had to be long forgotten skeletons in their closets, the kind Kimmy knew were far too ugly to see the light of day.

It wasn't until the end of the school year that the source behind the town's suffering showed itself to Kimmy. And not just to her. It also came for those who, by the end of the summer, proved to be the best friends she'd ever had.

Mrs. Kennedy sat at her giant desk, watching her students with a distrusting gaze. Her half-moon glasses kept inching down her nose, which she'd put a stop to before they could fall off of her face. Her long, pearl pink nails tapped against the wooden surface, never ceasing. They increased in volume the closer the hands on the classroom's clock inched closer to 3:00pm.

They were seconds away from being dismissed, if the way that the teacher puckered her lips was anything to go by. Sure enough, the final bell rang around them, causing her classmates to jolt up from their seats.

"Have a good summer," was Mrs. Kennedy monotone reply. "And make sure to remember the curfew."

Hardly anyone heard her, seeing as they had shoved their way into the now crowded hallway. Kimmy, was among the last to leave, hugging her things close to her chest as she made a beeline for her locker. The last thing she wanted was for one of the school assholes to make yet another snide comment about her.

But the images of what looked like hairy vaginas and grody dicks didn't seem to get the memo. They glared at her, slurs about her sexuality and nicknames like 'crocked tooth bitch.' Oh so lovely reminders to further prove how much Derry sucked.

She took a deep breath that boarder lined exasperation. After she entered her combination, she shoved her remaining things into her backpack. If she was fast enough, she wouldn't run into anyone on her way to meet Ben at the middle school. Just when she thought that she was in the clear, her locker door slammed shut, making her jump back in surprise.

The sound of gum being nosily chewed clued Kimmy in to who'd decided to invade her personal space. It was Melissa Johnson, Jim's on-again-off-again girlfriend. Watching the two of them interreact with each other the past few months was a wild roller coaster ride. One moment they'd be fine and dandy and the next they were in a heated argument.

Kimmy had to admit that she was beautiful, with her soft auburn curls and pale green eyes. She looked like a pageant queen, strutting down the streets with an elegant grace. If you looked close enough, you could still see hints of the toddler that she use to be. (Rosebud lips, apple cheeks, and an upturned nose.) Even her voice had an airy sound that threw Kimmy off whenever she spewed out anything nasty - which was always.

"Where do you think you're heading to in such a rush?" she asked in a sugar sweet tone, batting her thick eyelashes as if to distract Kimmy from what she wanted.

"Nowhere," Kimmy said, speed walking towards the exit.

Of course she didn't get off easy, seeing as Melissa practically pranced after her.

"You shouldn't lie, you know. It's rather rude and makes you look like a bitch," Melissa said, finally catching up to Kimmy. "Jimmy told me that your aunt doesn't like it when you do. Something about how you're 'allowing Satan to have control of your life.'"

It was a miracle that there wasn't a painful collision in the middle of the halls when Kimmy came to an abrupt stop. She spun around, making sure that they locked eyes. Melissa had a rather smug look about her, one that bragged about how easy it was for her to get under people's skin.

"What do you want, Melissa?" she nearly growled, so not in the mood to talk to someone who lived to bring those around her down.

"Why, to let you know that I'll be spending more time with your family, of course. Your aunt has even invited me to dinner tomorrow night."

You have got to be kidding me.

Kimmy narrowed her eyes, expecting something else to be tacked on to the end of the statement. "Is that all?"

Having not gotten the reaction she had wanted, Melissa released a huff of indignation. "What? Can't a girl tell another girl about meeting their boyfriend's mother?"

"Really? That's all you wanted to talk to me about?"

A snort of amusement answered that question. "You think that's why I wanted to talk to you?!"

No, I just think you're a petty jerk who thinks I'm too stupid to see right through you.

"Oh, no, no, brace-face. I wanted to tell you that if you step one toe out of line that'll you'll find that I can ruin you."

Like I don't already know that.

"Now that summer's here, you're going to keep an eye on Jim. Make sure that he doesn't do anything he shouldn't. Like, say, talk to girls on the phone?"

"And why should I care about what my cousin does?"

"Because if you don't, I'll tell your aunt that the rumors about you and Zelda are true."

That did it.

Since Zelda went missing, there was no one she could talk to about it without the fear of getting bit in the ass. She hated that she didn't have anyone to talk to about her sexuality, that she had to be careful about who she told. Knowing her luck, she'd end up telling someone she thought would be cool about it would end up being a huge dick about it. As much as she didn't like keeping this to herself, she knew what could happen if she didn't. Especially in a small town that had something sinister ran deep within its veins. And if Aunt Jean ever figured out that there was some truth to this. . . . She didn't know what would happen. Whatever her reaction may be, Kimmy knew that it would be horrible.

"Sure." Melissa began to smile in victory until Kimmy dropped: "Once he gets back from summer camp."

"And when would that be?"

"I don't know. August?"

"*August?!"*

Kimmy took a step back, eyeing a now fuming Melissa. It was as if she was a deadly volcano about to erupt, and she did not want to be anywhere near her when she did. "He. . . he didn't tell you?"

In a furious rage, Melissa stormed out of the high school - no doubt on the prowl for Jim. Something told her that things were, yet again, not going well between them. Another break up was on the horizon - be it today or a month from now. She wouldn't have asked Kimmy to spy on Mr. Leave Me the Fuck Alone if she wasn't desperate to keep him on a short leash. The good news was that she wouldn't be able to

contact Jim without him figuring out that something was up. Not to mention how hard it would already be to reach him, seeing as he'd only get mail once a week and zero phone calls.

Shaking her head, Kimmy inwardly crossed her fingers that nothing else would go wrong on her way to Ben.

Among the many things Stan expected his last day of school to go, running into Bowers and his gang wasn't one of them. Granted, he'd faced them countless times before, but they'd backed off around September. At least, whenever he was around Bill. A sneaking suspicion told him it had to do with Georgie's disappearance. He wouldn't be shocked if he found out that someone had told them to demand they leave Bill alone. So, having gotten use to the lack of bullying, he was surprised when Henry shoved Richie into him.

The friends fell to the ground with a heavy thump, bodies splayed out as they tried to regain their bearings. Patrick hovered over Stan, blocking the sun with his tall, lanky body. He watched as Patrick grabbed his kippah. That's when the panic began to creep in. If he showed up to the synagogue without it, his dad would kill him. Scratch that, *majorly* kill him.

A smug smirk spread across the bully's face when he noticed how fearful Stan had become.

"Nice frisbee," said Patrick.

"Give it back!" he shouted, voice cracking - which sent Patrick and Belch into fits of laughter.

Stan helplessly watched, arm outstretched, as his kippah was tossed towards the road. . . . Only to be caught by someone before it almost sailed into a passing bus' open window. When he managed to register who it was, Stan felt his heart begin to flutter. It was Kimmy, his friend and - as he had come to realize during the many weekends they'd spent together - crush.

The dark haired girl stood near the side of the road with her fingers firmly wrapped around his kippah. Her wide gaze kept switching

between her hand and the bus that the kippah had almost hit, her mouth shaped like an 'O.'

"What the *fuck* do you think you're doing, *dyke*?!" Henry asked in a scarily even tone, pulling Kimmy out of her shock.

She looked at him with an icy, narrowed gaze, a corner of her lips beginning to form into an unforgiving snarl. "I could ask you the same thing, dickhead."

Anger flamed across Henry's facial features. All he could seem to see was the person who had majorly pissed him off. He would have plowed into her if Blech's hand hadn't firmly wrapped itself around his bicep. Henry was about to hiss a threat at his friend when Belch motioned his head towards the front entrance. There, standing beside the cop cars and the mom of a missing kid named Betty Ripsom, was Sheriff Bowers. Stan noticed how the Sheriff sent his son a warning look, one that drained whatever he wanted to do next out of him. It was like watching a balloon pitifully deflate.

Just when Stan thought they would leave them be, Henry shifted his sight onto Bill who was shaking with rage. "You got a free ride because of your little brother. Well, ride's over, Denbrough. The summer's going to be a hurt train for you and your loser friends."

Henry licked the palm of his hand, letting his tongue slowly gliding over it. A wet sound filled the air around them as he wiped it across Bill's scrunched face. This immature action turned his gang of assholes into giggling children. Even Victor, who waited by Belch's car, joined in on the laughter. With a final look of warning aimed at Kimmy, Henry led the way to Belch's car. The moment they all settled in, they tore down the road, puffs of exhaust fumes trailing behind them.

"You okay, Stan?"

He looked up, finding himself staring up at a very much concerned Kimmy. She frowned, her free hand outstretched for him to take.

With a blush that had been set ablaze by how close they were, Stan let her help him back to his feet. After gingerly taking back his

kippah, he placed it back on top of his head of curls while he murmured, "Yeah. I'm okay."

"Good." A smile made an appearance, warm and with a hint of excitement. A copious amount of excitement that she'd been holding in came out as she bounced on the tips of her toes. "Did you see how I caught your kippah?! Oh, my god, that's probably the coolest thing I've ever done! I've never managed to catch anything in my life!" As if thinking that she'd said something horrible, Kimmy bit her bottom lip. "Sorry, I shouldn't have brought that up."

Stan thought it was quite adorable how excited she was about something that seemed minor to most. One of the things he liked about her was how she wasn't afraid to let everyone see how happy she was. It was contagious, so much so that he'd end up smiling like a fool who had feelings for one of his friends. . . which he was. Not that anyone would have seen this, considering how small his smiles usually were. It was something the school photographer liked to point out whenever they told him to 'say cheese.' He didn't really care. . . most of the time.

"It's alright. I don't mind," he promised her, eyes locking with hers.

At this, Kimmy smiled in relief, gently pulling her shirt's sleeve. Stan was about to ask her what she was doing tomorrow afternoon when Richie huffed, "No, no. It's okay. I can get up on my own."

Shit.

He forgot to help Richie up. The group watched as the glasses-wearing boy dramatically got back on his feet. He pinched the top corner of his glasses, shifting them so that they were no longer crooked. His brown eyes looked even bigger than they usually were, adding to the mischief his small smile held.

"Not like I was knocked on my ass, too. I mean, why help me when you can help the boy who obviously has a -"

"Beep, beep, Richie," Stan blurted out, glaring daggers at his friend.

Kimmy looked at them with confusion, one of her brows raised as she

alternated looking at Stan and Richie.

"That was p. . . pretty cool," stated Bill, Eddie nodding his head in agreement. "I'm Bill, and they're Richie and Eddie," he said, indicating to who he was introducing her to. Eddie, who stood furthest from the group, gave her a small wave of acknowledgment. Richie, being Richie, raised his chin while uttering a casual "sup?"

"I'm Kimmy," she responded after returning Richie's nod with one of her own.

"Thanks for helping us with B. . . Bowers."

Kimmy shrugged at this, hands gripping the straps of her backpack. "All I did was almost get my jaw punched, but thanks." With another smile sent Stan's way, she asked, "Still on for this weekend?"

"Definitely."

"Great." As she walked away from the boys who couldn't stop staring at her, she called over her shoulder, "See you later, Stan."

For a moment, none of them uttered a single word. That is, until Richie piped up, "You're not her type, you know."

Stan tore his gaze away from a retreating Kimmy, who had just rounded the edge of the brick building. "What?"

"You don't have boobs."

"Beep, beep, Richie," Bill and Eddie said in unison as Stan's dreamy grin fell.

Part of him suspected that there may be some truth to the rumors. That her and Zelda might have secretly dated during the fall semester. To be honest, he wouldn't have given it much thought. But the way the two of them had looked at each other with complete adoration made him think otherwise.

He never found the courage to ask her if she and Zelda were girlfriends for fear of angering her. From the sounds of it, she was already getting enough judgment from her classmates. The last thing

Stan wanted was for her to think that he thought any less of her, that she shouldn't like girls. If she was gay like the rumors claimed she was, he'd be okay with it. As long as she was happy with whoever she dated, Stan was happy, even though she'd would never see him as more than a friend. He valued their friendship too much to put his nose where it didn't belong. Stan couldn't bare the idea of going things going back to what they were before they met. To see her around town and not be able to talk to her or know what's on her mind. . . . Few people, save for his small group of friends, liked Stan for Stan. Losing someone he cared about, someone who got him while most others didn't, made his stomach drop.

"We don't know that for s. . . sure," Bill reminded them. "Those are just rumors."

Richie looked at his shoes with a tinge of guilt, not meeting Bill's eyes as he admitted, "Yeah, you're right."

After wordlessly checking to make sure they were on the same page, Bill said while walking to the bike rack, "Come on. We have to p. . . prepare for the B. . . Barrens."

And with that, Stan and the others followed their leader, parting ways once they reached the main road.

Shuffling out the backdoor, Ben tentatively made his way towards the bike rack. His eyes shifted across the school yard as he attempted to hold on to his final giant of a project. A sinking feeling of running into Henry and his friends had begun to settle in the moment school let out. The last time that had happened they rubbed his face in mud, laughing as they oinked at him. Needless to say, they got away before Kimmy met up with him, who became worried when he told her about his "tumble." She didn't leave his side for the rest of that day, helping him clean and patch up his scratches. She even listened to him talk about his latest research about Derry as they put together one of their Lego sets.

He knew Kimmy would have stuck up for him, that she wouldn't be afraid to track his bullies down. But he was ashamed of what had happened, as well as terrified about what they would do to her if she

confronted them. Ben didn't want her to get hurt for his sake. He couldn't live with himself if he knew he was the reason she had a black eye or split lip.

As he retrieved his bike, unsure if the unease he felt was right, someone behind him snapped, "You going to let me go by? Or is there a password or something?"

Ben spun around, having not heard them stomp their way down the stairs seeing as he was listening to one of his tapes. He was ready for another snide comment about his weight or a rough shove into the bushes. . . . But then he realized who it was that had spoken.

Standing before him was Beverly Marsh, the girl he couldn't get out of his mind since he first saw her in September. He watched as the tension her muscles held relaxed, softening upon seeing him.

He struggled for words as a million responses - ranging from witty to polite - rushed around his mind. "Oh. Um, sorry."

"Sorry isn't -"

It was then that he finally managed to lose his poor grip on his project. The loose monuments scattered around him, the tinnier bits disappearing in the grass. They were soon followed by the heavy clunk of his bike, further adding to the mess. Kimmy had told him that he should glue it or that he should at least put some of the pieces into zip lock bags. But he had a vision, one that he wouldn't be able to play around with if they were firmly stuck in place. Getting to school that morning had been challenging. But with Kimmy's help, he'd managed to make it to class without any major spills. Now that he was here, standing before the girl he adored, he was beginning to regret not gluing some of them down. This whole ordeal could have been avoided. . . possibly.

"- a password."

He attempted to quickly gather his fallen things, holding back tears of embarrassment. All the while, Beverly peered into his back while an awkward silence hung above them.

When he managed to regain some his composure, she told him, "Henry and his goons are over by the west entrance. So, you should be fine."

"Oh, I wasn't -"

"Everyone knows he's looking for you."

A sigh escaped Ben. Of course he was, and it sucked that even his crush knew that he was a favorite target of the bullies. It made him feel like he looked pathetic, that there was no way that she would want to be associated with him. It would only gain Henry's twisted attention. No one should have to find out how unpleasant of an experience it was. . . . Especially her.

"What you listening to?" she asked.

Before he could respond, Beverly reached out and gently took his headphones.

No!

He couldn't bring himself to look at her, cheeks growing warm the longer she had them. He could hear "You Got It (The Right Stuff)" softly playing, something that he normally found comforting. Now it was something he wished would disappear forever. . . . Okay, maybe not forever, but at least until he was far away from Derry Middle School.

"New Kids on the Block," she chuckled, her smile wide as her cheeks stretched to accommodate it.

Normally Ben would have melted and returned it with a smile of his own. Instead, he defensively stumbled out, "I don't even like them. I was just -"

A look of realization crossed Beverly, gaze lighting up with amusement. "Wait. You're the new kid, right? Now I get it."

For the first time since arriving in Derry, something lingered inside of Ben. The wonderous feeling of being seen by someone began to make a noticeable appearance. That, for once, a peer of his wasn't pointing

out one of his insecurities. He felt as if he wasn't so alone anymore. It was something he hadn't known until he managed to talk to Beverly outside of class.

Even though there was a part of him that knew it was a lie, Ben quietly told her, "There's nothing to get."

"I'm just messing with you," she said, playfully placing his headphones on top of his head. "I'm Beverly Marsh."

"Yeah, I know that, 'cause we're in the same class. Social Studies, and you were. . . ."

Wonderful.

"I'm Ben. But pretty much everyone calls me -"

"The New Kid," Beverly finished. "Well, Ben, there are worse things to be called."

It was then that he remembered the rumors. He'd heard whispers from people who claimed that she'd sleep with anyone who looked her way. They called her names that made him feel sick, that made him want to yell at them for saying things behind her back. How could someone have it in them to casually use such horrible words? To think that they wouldn't cut as deep as they actually did?

As he dwelled on these dark thoughts, Beverly reached towards his back and pulled out. . . his yearbook.

Oh, no.

"Let me sign this."

Before he could think of a way to get it back, she opened it, face dropping at the lack of names on the autograph pages.

As if she didn't already have enough to think that he was a loser. . . .

That's when she uncapped a pen and put it against the vastly empty space. Blue ink swirled itself to life, guided by the freckled hand of the girl it was attached to. A warm feeling spread through him, from

the top of his ears to the tip of his toes. It was. . . it was something he never expected to happen - with her or with any of his other classmates. With a final flourish, Beverly held the yearbook out for him to take.

"Stay cool, Ben from sosh class," she told him before making her way past him.

Ben stared at her signature, giddy and light and ecstatic beyond belief. "You, too, Beverly."

"Hang tough, new kid on the block."

For the first time since the nickname stuck, he didn't mind being called this. Not when it was attached to a good-natured departure. He chuckled. As he swirled his thumb across the glossy cover, a clever response popped into his head. "Please Don't Go, Girl!" he called out. "That's the name of another New Kids on the Block song. . . ."

She didn't hear him.

Of course she hadn't, seeing as she was far enough away where anything could be directed at anyone. God, he felt so stupid.

"Who are you talking to?"

Ben jolted at the sound of Kimmy's voice. She stood before him, leaning into her bike.

"Oh, uh, someone from my Social Studies class."

His sister managed to catch a glimpse at Beverly whose her red hair shimmered in the sun.

Like winter fire.

It was then that she noticed what remained of a brilliant blush leaving his cheeks. She had a knowing look, one that let Ben know that she had a feeling that Beverly was more than just a classmate to him.

"What's her name?" she asked, eyeing Ben who found the handle bars

of his bike suddenly so interesting.

"Beverly. . . Marsh."

"Huh." Kimmy lightly bumped her shoulder into Ben's. Thankfully, her soft smile told him that she wouldn't keep probing him for more answers. "Ready to go to the library?"

"Yeah. Sure. Let's go."

Kimmy tugged something off of the concrete, shaking her head in mock disappointment. "Don't drag your headphones on the ground, Benny," she teased. "We're people, not monsters."

"I'll remember," he promised, placing them around his neck.

After ruffling his hair, which Ben failed to avoid, Kimmy wrapped her arm around his shoulders. "Come on. Let's hit those books of yours. I'm dying to find out what you'll come across this time."

With that, the siblings left, chatting about what they planned on checking out next. They also failed to notice the pair of yellow eyes that hungrily watched them from the shadows of the woods.

I had a lot of fun writing Ben and Beverly's interaction. It's one of my favorite scenes from the film, because Benverley for life. The next chapter focuses on Stan. Hmm. I wonder what it'll be about?

Until next time, see you later :)

10. Mike Hanlon and Stan Uris

A day later than I said it would be up, but here's the new chapter :)

In other news, I was able to text Misha Collins! Granted, anyone can at the moment. It was still pretty exciting to get the chance to tell him how much I enjoy *Supernatural* and his character. Like, wow, okay. When do you ever get the chance to do something like that? I'm pretty sure the texts he's "sent" me are automated, so I'm still waiting for him to respond. . . *if* he responds. Until then, I'm happy with the automated messages and pictures he's sending to everyone.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Mike's grandfather didn't like going into Derry. In fact, he couldn't remember the last time the older man visited the town. If he needed something delivered or picked up, he'd send someone else. Always telling them before they left to not hang around once they completed their errand. But one thing Mike did know was the warnings that were whispered to him since he was old enough to talk. That something evil lived there, preying upon its people.

"Nothing good ever comes out of that place," his grandfather would tell him. *"Your parents were unlucky to find that out the hard way."*

The memories of the brief amount of time Mike lived there were enough for him to not question him. Racism was present, be they through looks of distrust as he rode his bike or even a hateful slur thrown his way. Some of the folk he interreacted with were nice enough, asked him about his day and how he was feeling. But he never managed to form any lasting relationships, ones that made him damn all the warnings. It would only make things more difficult than they already were.

That all changed the day he ran into. . . *IT*.

His grandfather had sent him into town with a delivery of mutton for

Quality Meats, a chore he did every other day. It would normally take no more than twenty minutes for him to leave the farm and give the shop's owner his meat. Mike found it to be the one thing he looked forward to. It gave him the chance to get away from the farm. To leave the expectations he had to face behind him. . . . Even though the run-ins he sometimes had with Henry and his goons did put him on edge. It was rather recent that he'd been tasked with assisting in the butchering of the sheep they raised. He hated looking into their innocent brown eyes as they filled with uncertainty. How their bleats of shock were cut short by the bars shot into their skulls. How he'd be the one responsible for taking their lives. . . .

As he rode further down Maine Street, he began to feel the weight he carried at home lift from his shoulders.

Though he could see why his grandfather distrusted Derry, Mike could also see what drew people in to it. There was a bookstore that had caught his eye, as well as a flower shop filled with sweet smelling blossoms. He even saw the beginnings of the Fourth of July Celebration posters taped to some of the old buildings. From the surface, it looked harmless, enough so to hide the ugliness beneath it. . . . Like the number of missing kids posters that kept growing at an alarming rate.

It was when he arrived at Quality Meats that Mike heard the familiar rumble of Belch Huggins' car. With a heart that felt as if it had stopped beating, he grabbed his bike and quickly made his way into the side alleyway. His pulse raced in urgency as he attempted to get out of sight before the racist teens spotted him.

He heard Henry's sleazy attempt to convince a girl passing them on the sidewalk to get in the car with him. Mike also heard her respond with angered disgust, "Creep!"

Seconds before the blue vehicle drove past, Mike managed to hide behind a collection of trash. Seemingly unaware of the victim it had missed, much to Mike's . All the while, he never once tore his widened gaze away from the road, breath heavy as he attempted to calm his nerves.

"Oh, Jesus," he whispered, hold on his handlebars tight, the anxiety

of getting his ass kicked leaving him.

The chances of them coming back were slim, but Mike didn't want to press his luck by reemerging from the alleyway. Instead, he took his bike from against the brick wall and placed it against a nearby dumpster. He caught a glimpse of the paint of the wall's long-forgotten mural. It had been sun-bleached from years of exposure and the lack of care in making sure it looked new again. Perhaps, Mike had once thought of the mural the first time he'd seen it, it had been of a clown, or even a circus. There was a chance his grandfather knew what it was in its prime, but that would only lead to him getting chewed out.

Mike shook his head, trying to push away any negative thoughts, and began to grab onto some of the wrapped lamb meat. It was when he heard the rattling of chains and rickety creaking of wood that the teen put a pause on the task at hand. Turning towards the back entrance, Mike peered at it with a mix of confusion and curiosity. Had that. . . come from the shop? Was someone trying to get out?

Just when he had begun to think that someone might need help, a violent *bang* pushed the locked door forward. The chains stopped it from opening, producing a dark crack. Mike nearly dropped the orders he held, the fear that had begun to get ahold of beginning to creep back. What he saw next nearly made his stomach rise up to his throat. Charred hands reached out to grab onto what they could, billows of smoke puffing out around them.

No! This can't be happening! Not again, no!

"Mike!" he heard the hoarse voice of his long dead mother scream.
"Mike!"

With each plea, more and more burning hands reached out, frantically searching for a way out.

"Hurry, son!" his father cried out, the orange glow of an approaching fire illuminating the far too many pairs of hands.

"Help! It burns!"

It was in the moment, that terrifying moment, that Mike was a toddler again. How he sat on his tricycle just outside his apartment door, messy tears falling down his cheeks. How he remained as still as an unmoving stone, the feel of a too hot radiator emitting from any cracks it could find. The fear of getting too close, of listening to his parents anguished cries as they burned alive. . . . It was too much for his young mind to handle, to face death as it slowly crept its way before him.

What do I do, Mama?! he wanted to cry out. What do you want me to do?!

When it was almost too much for Mike to handle, they retreated as if a vacuum had sucked them in to itself. The door, which had been chained by the owner, burst open. In the cooler was what appeared to be someone hanging from the ceiling. Their body swung back-and-forth, chain clanking as it moved with their weight. Grunts Mike had only heard come from a pig came from them, adding to the tense atmosphere that had been created.

Don't go near them, a gentle voice whispered in his mind. They will only bring you harm.

The sound of sheep bleating, like the ones he watched die earlier that day, replaced their grunts.

Innocent brown eyes staring up at him. Scared, weary of what his grandfather held in his hand. . . .

As if they had heard Mike's thoughts, the bleating came to an abrupt stop. They turned their head to look at him, as if they were standing inches from him. With a *plop*, they planted their feet on the ground. It was then that he could finally make out their shape. They, whoever they were, were a tall. Taller than anyone Mike had come across either in Derry or near the farm. And not just that. . . . They, *he*, looked like a clown.

With a slow, exaggerated wave, the clown's eyes began to glow like a pair of blinding headlights.

Tires screeched from Mike's right, jerking his attention away from

them. He barely had enough time to register Belch's car as it sped towards him. Before it could hit him, Mike fell back onto his ass. He ended up landing on top of a pile of cardboard boxes that smelled faintly of blood and meat.

With wide eyes, Mike watched as Henry stood atop the passenger seat. Rage contorted his body as he yelled, "Stay the fuck outta my town!"

While Belch gave him the finger, Henry flicked his cigarette butt at a cowering Mike. And just as fast as they had come, they sped off into the distance, leaving him alone with the -

He jumped when he heard the sound of chains again, readying himself to flee as fast as his legs could carry him. . . only to find the owner of Quality Meats standing in the doorway, rubbing his hands clean with a rag.

"Everything okay, Mike?" he asked. When the teen didn't respond, darting his gaze at his surroundings, he said with concern, "Mike? Are you okay?"

And to be honest, he wasn't sure. What he did know was that whoever had been in that freezer wasn't human, nor did they want to become his friend.

If only he knew how close to the truth he was.

Stan peered intensely at the Torah placed before him, forehead creased as he read through it. Although he wouldn't say he was fluent in Hebrew, he knew enough to be able to understand anyone who spoke it. He could even read some of it on his own. It just didn't come as easily for him, was something he had to take his time saying and/or reading. Though his mom told him that he'd be more than ready for his big day, there were others who would not let his few slipups go. In fact, they seemed to enjoy rubbing it in that he wasn't at their level. That, or they wouldn't speak to him without letting their condensation seep through.

He hated that he couldn't seem to please the people he felt like he

needed to. That no matter what he said or did, no one would care until he fit their ideal image of the kind of person he should become.

Case in point, his father. Derry's one and only highly respected rabbi. The same one who paced back and forth above him as Stan made his way through the reading he'd been assigned to read.

For the most part, he had been doing fairly well. It would have been stronger had he not shifted most of his concentration of studying for finals. Now it seemed that he'd back tracked a little, a rustiness that it hard to miss if you knew what he was reciting.

When he stumbled with a phrase, he began to rake his memory for this particular passage. Before he could pick back up where he'd trailed off, his father sternly interrupted him. Stan listened as he said it with such ease that it made Stan stiffen as he began to shrink into himself.

"You haven't been studying, Stanley," his father told him, glaring into the back of his warm neck. "How's it going to look? The rabbi's son can't finish his own Torah reading."

Shame filled Stan, shame that he couldn't seem to do anything right when it came to his faith. A faith he had been born and raised on. A faith that had been fed and shoved down his throat. At this point, he didn't know what he wanted to believe. If it was a teaching that he believed in, or something that his parents wanted him to. . . .

"Take the book back to my office. Obviously you're not using it," he commanded.

His dismissive tone told Stan to leave without saying a single word, a sense of dread filling him.

The office itself wasn't what filled the curly haired teen with dread. It was, for the most part, fairly normal. Dimly lit, dust dancing in the streams of light that peeked through the blinds, the faint scent of coffee. No. It was that painting that hung on one of the walls. "Judith" was a piece that had been there for as long as Stan could remember. His father had once mentioned that it had been left behind by the previous rabbi, a second-hand gift. It was a painting

that a former member had made in honor of the rabbi's mother. A testament to how much joy her music brought to the town of Derry. Stan had a feeling the reason why it hadn't been thrown out was because the rabbi didn't want to hurt their feelings. But not enough to feel guilty for leaving it behind when he retired not long after Stan had been born.

If it had been like any other painting Stan would have been fine. "Judith" was far from fine. From blending into the background. From being forgotten unless it was looked upon by a fleeting chance.

In it was a woman, one whose face was elongated, slanted at an odd angle that made it look slightly deformed. She had dark, mismatched eyes that peered into his soul and long fingers that were pinched onto the ends of a flute. She was, for every sense of the word, unnerving. And her mouth. . . . It was thin and narrow, just a couple of pale lines pressed tightly together. Stan use to think that they were hiding needle sharp teeth that were ready to bite onto anything that moved.

When Stan was younger, his father would berate him whenever he refused to step into the office.

"It's just a painting, Stanley. Stop crying. I told you to stop crying."

And so, with much difficulty, he did.

Now, if he ever had to go into his father's office, he would cover one side of his face as he passed it. The latter of which being what he ended up doing as he went to return the book he held. His hand cupped the side of his bowed head as he held his breath, wanting to leave as soon as possible.

Logically, he knew that it couldn't hurt him. It was a painting, the woman within it merely a poor reflection of the one it had been based off of. . . . That still didn't mean he couldn't feel a great unease whenever he was near it, though.

Today, for the first time since god knew how long, Stan stopped.

"You know what this means, don't you, Stanley? You're becoming a man. And a man does not back down when he is afraid."

Slowly, he turned to look at the thing that made a simple task that shouldn't make his heart race with the urge to flee.

I'm becoming a man, he told himself, eyeing "Judith" with an unwavering gaze. *I need to grow up. . . .*

It was when his heart had somehow managed to slightly calm that he realized it had become crooked. The need to keep everything neat began to beg him to fix it, gradually taking his uncertainty's place.

Shifting his hold on his father's book, Stan slowly made his way forward. A shaky exhale left his nostrils, one that could have been taken for displeasure or nerves. He took his free, clammy hand and straightened "Judith" back to its normal position.

He had managed to touch the frame for the first time in his life. It was an action, he had come to realize, that didn't lead to any known repercussions. It was because of this that Stan began to think that perhaps he had been childish. That what he had been so afraid of for practically his entire life was nothing more than a thing he could hold. A thing that he had the power to destroy or take care of, if he so desired to do either. Either way, this newfound discovery gave Stan the courage he needed to move on. Hands now holding onto the book, he closed the remaining distance between him and the shelves.

It was when he slid it into the only empty slot that the sound of clattering that an eeriness filled the air. Stan to leapt in place, his shoulders tense, once again. The painting was lying face-down on the carpet, inviting him to come and pick it up.

It's just a painting, he reminded himself before stepping forwards. *It's just a painting. It's just a painting. . . .*

But as he carefully hung it back on its nail, Stan could only stare at it with unnerving disbelief. The woman was gone, leaving nothing but a splotchy tan background.

Stan stepped back, breath heavy and ragged as his mind raced with a million and one things. How it wasn't possible. That she couldn't be missing. She wasn't a real person. Nothing painted on canvas could simply leave as if it were nothing. . . .

But where was she? Why wasn't she there? It had to be a trick of the light. Of course it was. There was no other way to explain it. . . .

He had crept back as he tried to figure out what was going on, his breaths ragged, body trembling.

The sound of a flute playing a haunting melody echoed from the closet, its door creaking open on its own. Stan watched as this unfolded, frozen. A horrifying thought that Judith was hidden within it crossed his buzzing mind.

No. She. . . she can't be. That. . . that isn't possible. She isn't real. She -

A metallic *thud* interrupted his thoughts, jolting him back to his father's office. . . . Only, it hadn't come from the closet. . . It had. . . it had come from behind him.

But it was when he gradually forced himself to turn around that he discovered where the woman had gone. After a choked, heavy gasp, Stan panted as he lost control of his breathing. The thing that he had been told to no longer fear stood before him, clocked in the shadows.

The unnaturally shaped woman that use to haunt his dreams, stepped forward. She peered down at Stan, eyes white, thin brows raised as she took in the terrified state he was in. As if she had sensed his fear, as if it were as tangible as rotting fruit, her lips parted to reveal rows and rows of teeth. . . just as he had once imagined them to look like.

She growled, lowly, reaching out to grab hold of Stan. Only he didn't stick around long enough for her to succeed.

Stan raced towards the door as if the world was on fire and slammed it shut behind him. He screamed as he flew out of the building, racing home on his bike without once looking over his shoulder.

Had he done the latter, he would have seen the silhouette of *IT* as *IT* shivered with delight. With a wild hunger, *IT* watched him flee until his shrieks became nothing more than a faint echo. A low, gurgling sound rattled in *IT*'s throat as thick, foaming saliva dripped from *IT*'s mouth.

Soon, Stan-y boy. Soon you will be mine, and all your worries will

disappear as I much and crunch on your yummy skull.

I seem to have a thing for ending chapters from *IT*'s perspective. I'm sorry if that's a bit redundant, but I kind of like it. I'd say that it won't happen again anytime soon, but all bets are off.

Until next time, see you later :)

11. Ben and Kimmy Hanscom

This took me forever to edit because I couldn't find it in me to sit down and go through it a few times. But, hey, it had to be done. It's not that I hate this chapter. I had hit a wall and was like: "Yeah, no. Not going to do that thing." Thank god that didn't last.

I started reading *Carrie* the other day, so that's fun. I'm only a few pages in, but I like it so far. If the original film is anything to go by, I'm going to enjoy this book. Once I'm done with *Carrie*, I'm plan on picking up *Salem's Lot* next. Aside from it being about vampires, I know nothing about the latter.

In other exciting news, I'm beginning to plan a trip out to Maine. I want to stay in or near Bangor and pop down to Salem, MA for a day. But since it's in the early stages of planning, the trip may or may not even happen. Who knows? Maybe I'll be looking at Stephen King's house sometime next fall (god, can you imagine that?). Perhaps I'll even see the Thing of Evil herself from afar (which I doubt, but I can dream).

I'm also planning to dress up as Richie for Halloween this year. My original plan was to be Dorothy, but I've been her twice already, so I thought going with something new would be fun. If I can get my costume together in time, I can go dressed as him to an *IT* pop-up that's at a bar in Chicago. . . . That is, if I can make it in before the end of the month.

Also, I found an amazing writer on Tumblr who goes by harringtons-imagines. They write head canons and imagines for *IT*, *Stranger Things*, *Marvel*, and *Harry Potter*. You should check them out.

Trigger Warnings: Bullying, fat-shaming, and a character being cut by another character.

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

Kimmy glanced at Ben beneath her eyelashes as he carefully wrote on the back of a postcard. The same postcard he had insisted they buy on the way to the library. She'd been confused at first, wondering who on Earth he would send it to. It was when she saw his soft, dreamy expression that she began to put two and two together. It was for Beverly Marsh, the first person who had signed Ben's yearbook. The same girl she had seen him talk to when she met with him after school the previous day.

She had smiled at the sight of Beverly's signature, hovering over a row of hearts, when Ben shyly let her take it from him. Few people were kind to the Hanscom siblings, here in Derry or elsewhere. It was rare for them to even stick around long enough to have a yearbook from any of their previous schools. To see that someone had been kind enough to take their time do this small act for Ben warmed Kimmy's heart. Kimmy knew that he'd never admit to her that he liked someone, seeing as he did tend to be rather shy about certain things. Part of her was aware of the fact that he already knew that she knew, that all he'd need to do was give her verbal confirmation.

Out of everyone, the siblings knew how to read each other the best. Well, better than others, at least. It was because of this that Kimmy had worried more than once that he'd caught on that she had feelings for Zelda. The worry of him knowing she was bisexual, though, made her deny that he did.

After Ben had finished reading what he wrote beneath his breath, the sound of a bell chirping outside caught their attention.

Peering out the window, they watched as a group of boys rode down the street, hollering at each other. It took a second, but Kimmy was able to recognize them. It was Bill, Stan, Richie, and Eddie. As she the began to pass the library, Bill, who wouldn't let anyone go in front of him, called out, "*High-ho, Silver! Away!*"

Hearing this sparked an interest in Kimmy. Not a lot of people around her age were into Westerns, let alone name a couple off the top of their head. If they saw each other again, and the circumstances allowed, she'd ask about his taste in films. If this was anything to go by, perhaps he had some good insight on *The Lone Ranger*. . . .

Kimmy was pulled back in by the sound of something thumping against their table. Her and Ben glanced down at what sat before him, both of them eyeing it with curiosity.

"Found it," announced the librarian, Ms. Starrett.

Sure enough, the book Ben requested, *A History of Old Derry*, sat before him in all its dusty glory.

"Isn't it summer vacation? I would think you'd be ready to take a break from the books?" she asked, tone and posture giving off I'm-an-adult-so-I-know-what's-best vibes.

"I like it here," Ben meekly told her.

And it was true. It was the place the two of them enjoyed spending most of their time. Unlike Kimmy, who would hang out with Stan over the weekends, there wasn't anywhere else Ben could or wanted to go. It was his one escape when he needed time away from the rest of their family.

"We *both* do," Kimmy said, butting in with a look that read 'try me and see how far it gets you.'

It was then that Ms. Starrett seemed to realize for the first time that Ben wasn't exactly alone, that he had company.

"Kids should spend their summer outside with friends," the older woman continued. Her eyes, which were hidden behind a pair of large glasses, sent them pointed looks. "Don't you have any friends?"

"Don't *you* know how to mind your own business?" Kimmy fired back.

Ms. Starrett glared at her, torn between telling her to mind her manners and acting as if she hadn't heard her.

"We're good. Thank you," Ben said in a rush, letting her know that he knew what Kimmy had said hadn't been appreciated.

With a quick succession of taps atop the book, Ms. Starrett let them be with a huff and an annoyed roll of her eyes.

Kimmy watched her retreat, making sure she wouldn't change her mind, when Ben said, "You didn't have to do that."

She shrugged her shoulders, going back to the comic she was in the middle of reading. "She was being rude."

"I know, but still could have left it alone."

"What's that suppose to mean?"

"I don't know. . . . It's just that sometimes you get a little too. . . over-protective."

A bit taken aback by this, Kimmy snapped her head up to look at Ben. Her brother wore a look that was stuck between assertiveness and sensitivity.

"I was not being over-protective," she argued. "She was being a jerk, so I got her to stop."

Ben shook his head. "You only made it worse."

"I did *not*," she hissed back.

It was then that Ben's feelings finally came to the surface, the avoidance of directness gone. "She would have kicked you out, Kims."

"Good."

"No, *not* good."

Silence hung between them, heavy and uncertain. Kimmy had begun to play with the corner of her comic while Ben stared down at the book he'd requested. The argument they were having beginning to sink in.

"I. . . I like that you stick up for me, Kimmy. But sometimes. . . sometimes I wish. . . ."

"That I didn't?" Kimmy finished, heart sinking to the pit of her stomach.

A beat passed, confirming that she was right on the money.

Trying not to let her emotions get the best of her, she swallowed the lump rising in her throat. This only proved to be a tricky feat once the prickling feeling of tears began to grow in the corners of her eyes.

"Kimmy -"

"I, um, I think I'm going to, uh, look for. . . look for something else to read."

Before he could say anything else, she got up from her seat, speed-walking to the back of the library. If she did, she would have lost it, drawing in the attention of the few other people who were there with them.

Once she rounded the corner, she carefully pressed her back against the shelf she stood in front of. When she tilted her head towards the ceiling, beams of white-ish light hitting her. It stung her eyes, further adding to the blurriness she fought so hard to suppress. Her lips trembled, biting down on them to reduce the chance of a choked sound escaping her.

It had been awhile since they'd argued, which she knew had something to do with their response to conflict. Their fights, big or small. would always throw her off balance once she took a step back and realized what they were doing. All it managed to do was leave a sour taste in her mouth, lingering like an unwanted after-taste.

Perhaps Ben was right. Perhaps she was a bit too-overprotective. But she couldn't help it. She hated it when people were awful to Ben. It was hard for her to stand by and let it happen without calling them out. Even if she had to resort to physically fitting them, she would - and she had, when they were younger. What would that say about her if she ignored it, let it pass on by as if it were nothing more than an after-thought? The funny thing was that she didn't usually do the same for herself. That could be due to how she couldn't see her own reactions, that it was all a matter of what she felt when it happened to her. Even if she did stand her ground for her own sake, she would almost-always end up giving in.

By the time she felt her world had become calm again, Kimmy had no idea how long it had been since she left Ben. So when she finally managed to take a deep breath, she returned, only to find an empty table as Ben was nowhere to be seen.

There was an egg sitting in the back room's hallway, steaming as if it had been taken out of a fireplace. He now knew how stupid of him it was to get closer to it, that he should have trusted his gut to find Kimmy and leave. When he saw another one sitting further down the way, his curiosity got the best of him. The further he went, the more he saw. Sitting there. Perfectly balanced. Steaming.

He hadn't realized he was in the basement until he stood between the rows of boxed archives. Of course that should have been the red flag that sent him scurrying back up the stairs. But it didn't. Instead, he picked up the seemingly final egg, twirling it in his hands. Though it looked like it would be hot, it felt cool - as if had been pulled fresh from a fridge. Its scorch marks staring up at him, challenging him to feel how unnatural it was.

The lights buzzed, flickering as if they were static on a TV, as the faint sound of chanting echoed around him.

Ben took a step back, readying himself to finally come to his senses. His feet stopped when he heard the amused giggles of a young girl.

Was there. . . was there someone else down here? Were they the one who let the red balloon he saw go, the thing that had led him to this bizarre trail of hard-boiled eggs?

He made his way further in, his breathing becoming heavy, heart pounding against his chest. A dark shadow, laughing with glee, rounded a corner, startling him. It was then that the feeling of uncertainty came back full-force, urging him to get out of there. Now. Fast. Don't look back. Keep running.

Splat!

Ben turned, hiding behind a pillar, as he gazed at the stairwell, mouth agape.

Someone was standing at the top of the final set of stairs, arms wrapped around a collection of Easter eggs. They began to descend, lumbering back-and-forth, slow and nearly unbalanced. It was then that Ben noticed that whoever this was did not have a head. . . That the steam he saw on the eggs that had taken him down here came from within them.

It was the boy from the Easter Explosion article, the one whose head Ben saw in the branches of a tree. He watched as the rest of the eggs fell to the ground, the headless boy's shoulders awkwardly hunched over. Stopping the moment he was in front of Ben. And then the headless boy twitched, lunging forward.

In the blink of an eye, Ben spun and raced down the aisles, the sound of aggressive footsteps thumping behind him.

The ability to think beyond getting away left Ben panting as he rushed through the tight maze. He narrowly avoided bumping into the sharp corners as he kept glancing behind him to see if he was fast enough. But the further on he went, the closer the headless boy was to closing in on him.

"Egg boy!" a deep, raspy voice called out.

Ben wished he hadn't looked back, almost shrieking in terror at what he saw. Instead of the headless boy, a clown - with wild hair and cracked face paint - looked back at him. Wanting. Chortling. Ready to pounce.

It was then, as he began to dash up the stairs, that he plowed into hard into something. Or, rather, *someone*.

A disgruntled gasp left Ms. Starrett as the files she held tumbled around them. She puffed out a sting of air, spluttering for a response. It was when she managed to regain her bearings that she glared at the trembling boy before her. "What on *Earth* are you doing?" she hissed.

The clown, he wanted to tell her. *There's a clown down here!*

There was no one else with them when Ben looked behind him. Only

rows upon rows of metal shelves, neatly filled with cardboard boxes.

Without giving her an answer, Ben darted forward, making his way back upstairs.

The moment Kimmy had settled back into her chair, figuring that Ben had gone off to look for another book or article to inspect, he ran out of the back rooms, eyes wide.

"What were you doing back there?" she asked once he reached their table.

She didn't know what to expect to hear from him, she really didn't. But the last thing she thought he'd tell her was, "We need to go."

Kimmy watched as he rushed to grab his things, messily shoving all that he could into his backpack. "What? What do you -"

"Now. Like, *now* now."

Concern replaced the confusion, what was left of her frustration now long gone. "Benny? What's wrong?"

"Please, Kims."

She stared at him as he shakily zipped his zipper, bits of paper stopping in a few times from closing. Whatever had happened, she knew that she wouldn't get an answer until they left. Without another question, Kimmy did what he'd asked of her, albeit much calmer than he had been.

"Okay," she said, slinging the straps of her backpack across her shoulders. "We're going. We're gone."

As if he hadn't heard her, Ben made his getaway for the exit, causing Kimmy to lengthen her strides to catch up with him.

"So, want to tell me what that was all about?" Kimmy asked as they descended the steps.

For a moment, she thought that Ben wouldn't talk to her, that maybe he was still upset from their argument. It was when he took a slow, uneven breath that she knew that was far from what had gotten him shaken-up.

The worry she felt returned ten-fold, hitting her like a frying pan to the face. "Benny?"

Her brother looked at her, brown eyes unfocused and in a million places all at once. His fingers gently rubbed small circles over the postcard in his hold, putting it into a pocket in his pants. He looked so uncertain, as if he didn't even know what had freaked him out.

When he was finally on the verge of answering her, they heard a question that made their blood run cold. "Where are you off to, losers?"

Henry was leaning against Derry's solider memorial, one of his legs crossed over the other. There was a hateful look in his eyes, one that Kimmy knew meant they were in the deep shit.

Instinctively, she gripped Ben's backpack, pushing him forward with urgency. She was not going to let them hurt him. . . .

Them. . . . Oh, god.

That's when she realized that the rest of his group were nowhere near him. Before she could do anything about it, it was too late. Two figures jumped out of the bushes, blocking the siblings from their path of escape.

"Gottcha!" declared Patrick in triumph as he grabbed hold of Ben.

"Benny!" she cried as Belch did the same to her.

Had Victor been the one to go after her, she might have been able to get away and shove Patrick to his ass. But with Belch. . . there was no way she was strong enough to do so with near ease. Her arms were shoved to her sides as the bully wrapped one arm around her chest and gripped her wrist in his other hand.

Ben cried out as Patrick and Victor grabbed hold of either one of his

biceps, pushing him towards a chuckling Henry. His eyes glistened with glee as the siblings struggled to get away, even try to reach out to each other.

A smile, one that sent a shiver down Kimmy's spine, graced Henry's smug face as he looked her way. "You shouldn't have messed with me, brace-face."

"Wait!" Ben protested as the siblings were forced to walk further and further away from the eyes of town. "Leave us alone!"

"Fucking hold him!" commanded Henry.

Patrick chortled in response, "Smack him!"

"Don't let tubby get away!"

Initially, Kimmy had shakily spat a string of curses at them, which only spurred them on. They had laughed as they wriggled, around, feebly attempting to get away. Ben, who they knew couldn't run fast enough, was shoved between Victor, Patrick, and Henry. When Kimmy had almost gotten away, tripping over her feet as Belch swung her back around.

"Pick that bitch up!" Henry had yelled at Belch.

Belch gladly did as he was told. He'd scooped her up over his shoulder and wrapped one of his arms around the back of her knees so she couldn't kick him.

"Put me the fuck down!" she had growled, pounding her fists as hard as she could against his broad back.

All that had done was get her a few grunts and a roar of laughter.

"Get him!" Henry roared at Ben's cries for help. "Hold him, Hockstetter!"

Patrick raced behind Ben, pulling him back into his waiting arms. Victor flipped Ben's T-shirt over his head and began drumming his stomach, rolling his tongue.

"Stop it!" Kimmy shrieked, though she couldn't see what was happening. "Leave him alone, you fuckers!"

The wind was knocked out of her when Belch dropped her onto the ground. A wave of pain rushed through her, her breathing becoming a near impossible feat. She rolled onto her side, clutching her ribs as she brought her knees to her chest. Through the ringing in her ears and the haze of her watery gaze, she watched as Belch helped push Ben against a fence.

The feeling of being roughly pulled onto her feet brought Kimmy back to a slightly more stable state. Victor didn't even have to put much of an effort into keeping her where she was. All she could do was helplessly watch them mercilessly belittle her brother.

"Look at all this blubber!" exclaimed Belch.

Leaning into Ben's face, Patrick grinned maliciously. "Let me light his hair, like Michael Jackson."

The implication of what he wanted to do drew a squeak of anger from Kimmy, a sound that was weaker than she had expected.

"Just hold him," Henry said, pulling a knife out of one of his jeans' pockets.

"Get off me!" Ben screamed. "Get off me!"

A car rolling slowly past them drew in the attention of the teens. While the bullies looked on with worry, their targets felt a twinge of hope that they'd be saved. Instead of what they'd expected, the people inside of it looked at them with disinterest. . . . Almost as if they didn't want to get involved with what the teens were in the middle of.

"Help!" Ben called out again, watching as their chance of getting away crossed the bridge. A red balloon popped up in their backseat, popping against the ceiling as the car hit some bumps along the way.

No! Come back! Help us!

"Help!"

His head jerked to the side when Henry punched him in the face, lips drawn up in a snarl, over and over and over again. As if getting back at him for what could have happened had the driver stopped.

"*Benny!*" Kimmy screamed, gasping in discomfort when Victor jerked her back by her ponytail.

Blood trickled out of one of Ben's nostrils, dazed from the hits he had taken. Seeing this, Henry slapped his hands over Ben's ears and began to shake him back to his senses.

"This is what the locals call the Kissing Bridge," the leader of the bullies said.

Kissing Bridge. . . .

She looked around, the sight of a familiar red drawbridge towering above them. . . . The same place Zelda had kissed her back in November. . . .

"It's famous for two things," he continued, holding up a couple of his fingers. "Sucking face -"

Belch puckered his lips and made loud, wet sounds.

"- and carving names."

He flicked open his knife, happily glaring down at Ben as its sharp edges shone in the afternoon sun.

Kimmy's eyes widened in disbelief upon realizing what he intended to do. Not just to Ben, but also to her.

"Don't you fucking dare! Don't you fucking touch him with that!" she shouted shrilly, causing Victor and Belch to cringe for a moment.

Before Ben could beg Henry not to hurt him, the bully took his weapon and began to carve at his skin. Kimmy listened to her baby brother her best buddy in the whole world, cry out in agony as a giant 'H' was forced into his skin. She shrieked at Henry to stop, to get the others to come to their senses. If the way their jaws hit their feet was anything to go by, Belch and Victor didn't think that their

friend would do this. Patrick was the only one of them he took immense pleasure in watching Henry take his bullying to the next level.

"Woah, woah!" protested Belch. "Henry!"

"SHUT UP!" he screamed, causing Belch to nearly lose his hold on Ben. "I'm going to carve my whole name into his fucking cottage cheese!"

In the blink of an eye, Ben brought one of his legs up to meet the asshole's chest. He pushed off of it with his foot, rolling over the fence and down into the woods below. Kimmy felt a sudden rush of adrenaline, giving her the strength she needed. With all the force she could muster, she hit the back of her skull against Victor's face. He grunted with a mix of surprise and pain as he let her go and stumbled backwards. She didn't linger, rushing down the road and into the woods, the June air brushing past her as she ran like a bat from hell. Never stopping for air, not paying attention to where she was going until it was too late.

Shaken up by what had happened, she didn't know how far she had run until she almost fell face-first into the foliage. A hiss whistled between her teeth as the sting on her palms and knees sent a shock of through her system. Her breaths were hard and labored, attempting to regain control of herself.

When the warmth she gained from her run felt as if it had begun to cool, Kimmy sat back on her haunches. Rubbing a thumb above the minor wound on her hand, she shifted her gaze around the area she had stumbled upon. It was then that she knew she was nowhere near anything she recognized. She was lost. Completely and totally stuck in the middle of Derry's woods.

"*Fuck. Shit. Fuck. Shit,*" Kimmy said as she spun around, trying to find anything that looked somewhat familiar.

A scream echoed around her, rooting her to the ground.

Had that been Ben?

Oh, no.

What if they caught Ben?! She needed to find him, and fast.

By the sounds of it, no one had followed her. And, if they had, it seemed like they didn't know which way she went. That was at least one good thing on her side, considering the hundreds of bad things that were against her.

But where to now? Which way would get her out, and which was the most-likely direction Ben could have gone?

Before she could come to a decision, the something softly cried out in despair. At first, she thought she had imagined it, but when it cried out even louder than before, Kimmy knew it wasn't in her head.

Is that. . . a baby?

As if answering her, the cries grew even more in volume. From the sounds of it, it was inches away, right behind a fallen log covered in moss.

Logic left Kimmy the moment she concluded that a defenseless baby had been abandoned. She couldn't leave it out here, vulnerable to the weather. Knowing that it didn't know what was happening, that their parents had left them to fend for itself. It was then that she made her way towards it, uncertainty weighing in on her. With the tips of her feet against the log, Kimmy looked over it to find a white blanket moving like a fat caterpillar. It whimpered, cries gurgling wetly in its throat.

When she went to pick it up, a force whooshed over her, making her stop, hands inches away from the poor thing.

Get out, a voice firmly told her. *Don't look back.*

What?

Kimmy had begun to retreat into herself when a blood-curdling wail exploded from the heap. It kept bouncing up and down, up and down, up and down. In its wild movements, the blanket flung off to the side, revealing what was beneath it. It was the baby from

Eraserhead. Alien-like. Warty. Scabbed. Tightly wrapped in bandages. Whimpering for mercy. Its eyes shot open to reveal a soulless, black stare.

With a scream that scratched at her vocal cords, Kimmy stumbled back. It was a wonder that she managed to catch herself before she could hurt herself again. She could hear the sound of scissors slicing fabric. The sound of the baby's gasps leaving its tiny lungs. The sound of organs spilling out in wet splatters.

The need to vomit began to overtake her, dizziness beginning to return with a vengeance. And she would have, had she not heard, *"Help me, Kimmy! Help me! My insides are outside!"*

Arms, long and bone-thin, shot out of the baby's sides. They pulled it upwards, letting what was left of its body hang, organs dangling on the dirt.

"What the fuck?!"

"Let me grow inside of you, Kimmy! Let me grow inside of you so that I can become a baby you can love!"

With a mighty roar, the baby leapt towards her. Yipping in shock, she hit it as hard as she could, sending it soaring through the air. She didn't bother to wait to see where it landed. Following a powerful pull, Kimmy sprinted away. Tears of fear fell down her dirty cheeks as it remained on her tail, pitifully pleading, *"Please love me, Kimmy!"* The more she ignored them, though, the more threatening they became. *"I told you to love me!"*

NO!

Giving a final push of energy, she darted out of the trees and into. . . a jogger.

The two fell to the ground in a tangle of limbs. She felt her right shoulder hit the ground, but not enough to cause anything more than a gnarly bruise. When the shock began to wear off, and she had clumsily gotten back up again, an annoyed voice said, *"The fuck are you doing?!"*

Kimmy, having been brought back to a fraction of her senses, began to look around. It was then that she noticed that she was closer to the start of downtown Derry than she had thought she was. Beneath her was a road, cracked and sun-bleached. A man, a little younger than her mom, was bent before her. He looked at her as if she were crazy, proclaiming that the world was coming to an end. That's when she noticed that the baby wasn't yelling at her anymore. That there wasn't any trace of it nearby.

What?

"Hello?!" Are you deaf?"

All she did was look at him, frazzled. "S. . . sorry."

He rolled his eyes at her, hands resting on the small of his back. "Oh? You're 'sorry,' you say? Well, tell that to my back! I'm going to have to ice it when I get home, thanks to you."

Wanting to get as far away from the woods as possible, she took off, the jogger's protests fading away. She didn't care that she'd pissed him off, that he yelled at her. All she could think of was that fucking baby, its cries latching onto her like a terrible nightmare.

It was interesting to write Kimmy's first interaction with IT. That scene looked a bit different from what it is now, though the baby was always going to be part of it. Honestly, I find how it ended up to be way more unnerving than my initial plan.

Until next time, see you later :)

12. Patrick Hockstetter

This was pretty dark to write. Like, god. It's never fun exploring the mind of someone awful. I mean, *IT* and Richard are real pieces of work, too, but something about Patrick is a bit. . . yuck to convey. That being said:

Trigger Warnings: Bullying, fat-shaming, use of the 'd' slur, and character death.

Disclaimer: I don't own *IT*. Stephen King does.

The people of Derry knew that something was off about Patrick. How he'd only smile if someone was in serious trouble. How roadkill was gone in a matter of hours. How some of the stray cats had a tendency to disappear without a trace. How his baby brother had suffocated on seemingly nothing one night. He made others feel uncomfortable by merely passing them on the street. Made them flinch whenever he so much as coughed into his fist. Yes. There was something off-putting about the teen, as if a cloud of despair followed him wherever he went.

It really was his calling in life. After all, when you're the god of your universe, you can do most anything you set your mind to. Which, he supposed, was why he felt drawn to Henry, Derry's infamous bully.

Henry was cruel. He wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty if it meant demeaning anyone that could be perceived as weak. From dogs to the losers at school, he'd dig his claws in and raise his voice until his victims cowered beneath him. It truly was a wonderous sight to behold. Which is why he'd be brave enough to do some damage, or at least try to.

Sometimes Victor and Belch would let them know if they'd gone too far. These annoying protests were the reason why he didn't go much beyond empty threats. After all, you can't get your ass handed to you if you don't leave any evidence behind. Sometimes words were all he needed to scare the shit out of others. He found that this could be far more entertaining than beating the fuck out of his dorky peers. It

tended to give him something to think about at night or when he had nothing better to do to occupy his time.

So when Henry wanted to show the new kids that they were the last people that should be messed with, Patrick agreed. More than ready to get his hands on the little freaks.

The fat one, Ben, who had a hard time getting away from them whenever they cornered him. Who hated conflict and had most-likely never won a fight in his entire sorry life. He was a middle schooler, a new kid who moved to town a couple weeks into the school year. Always hiding in the library, never interacting with anyone, aside from his sister.

Ah, yes. Kimmy. The dyke. Or, maybe, she wasn't. Patrick didn't really care one way or the other. All he wanted was to get a reaction from her. But, perhaps, she was - considering that she was mighty close to Zelda before she went missing in November. She wasn't bad to look at, but she was far from the type of girl he liked to go after: pretty, social, and in possession of a mean streak. She looked like she should still be in middle school. With her tiny frame, oversized clothes, braces, and bouncy ponytails, she looked like she should still be in middle school. Regardless, it was always fun to make her squirm.

They had succeeded in getting them away from the rest of the town. Had held them captive at the Kissing Bridge. And oh how much he wanted to burn them with his lighter. But Henry had dibs, to do what he wanted before letting Patrick have at them. It was how guaranteed his chance to leave his mark, like the signature at the bottom of a painting.

But then Henry had let his guard down a little too much.

First Ben, bleeding from the 'H' that had been carved into his stomach, pushed himself off of Henry's chest. He rolled over the fence and tumbling down, down, down the hill before fleeing like his ass was on fire.

And then Kimmy fucking head-butted Victor before making a bee-line for the woods.

"She broke my fucking nose!" Victor had moaned as he dramatically folded into himself, blood gushing down his face.

No one had cared enough to help him.

"Go after her!" Henry had shouted at Belch.

His anger had sent their strong friend after her, not going nearly fast enough to catch up with her in-time.

Henry and Patrick were the only ones to go after Ben, leaving a groaning Victor to get ahold of himself. Of course, Patrick was the only one who followed him, seeing as Henry had dropped his pocket knife. The one his father had given him. The one thing that would earn him one hell of a beating if he returned home without it.

The image of Sheriff Bowers hitting his son without mercy made Patrick smile. Even if it was from afar, he wished that he could witness it. So it was of no surprise that he left him on his own, yelling at the lanky teen to get down on the ground and search for it.

"You want me to get our little friend, don't ya?" was the only thing he said before trekking after Ben, never stopping until he reached the river.

If I were a fat, slow loser, which way would I go?

He made the decision to follow the current. If he was correct, Ben's panic would have prevented him from thinking outside of the box. To choose the dumbest option presented to him, leading him to an eventual world of hurt.

Predictable, aren't we?

But of course he was. Everyone was. All you had to do was look close enough and you'd be able to calculate the most likely move. In the end, everyone was a pawn in the grand scheme of things - all except Patrick, of course. He made his own rules. Even if it meant he had to erase his infant brother from the picture.

It was when he came across the entrance to Derry's sewage system that he heard the sound of pebbles plinking.

Oh, you're much more predictable than I thought.

As he made his way into the dank, putrid hideout, he took out his can of hairspray, along with his favorite lighter. He disregarded the water lapping at his boots and the trash that tapped his ankles as he waded further in. His gaze scanned his dim surroundings for any sign of the boy he couldn't wait to melt the skin off of.

"I hear ya, tits," Patrick called out in a sing-song tone when he heard the sound of clattering only feet away. When a stream of flames licked themselves to life, it illuminated two tunnels for him to take. "Don't think you can stay down here all damn day, now."

But the deeper he went, the quieter his victim became, as if he hadn't come here in the first place. And perhaps he hadn't. Perhaps Patrick had been wrong. Perhaps it had been a rat he'd been chasing. Perhaps

"*You found us, Patrick,*" someone whispered, their voice deep and hoarse.

Definitely not the new kid.

"*You found us, Patrick,*" a girl quietly echoed.

The hell?

It was when he blew another round of hairspray into his lighter that he realized how grave of a mistake he had made. Him. The grand master of the universe. The god who made the rules and chose which ones he wanted to follow.

There, inches away, reeking of rank decomposition, were the faces of rotting children.

Zombie children.

They lumbered towards him, limbs limp, clothes covered in filth, faces sunken.

Patrick screamed as the girl leading the pack grinned at him. Her teeth were black, caked with dried blood, and in the beginning

phases of rotting out of her skull. Gaze a soulless, milky white.

The sound of their giggles followed him as fled, breath heavy as he felt his heart begin to rise to his throat. Water flooded his nostrils when he tripped, face and shirt now covered in muck, as he struggled to come up with a way out. . . .

Nothing looked familiar.

How could it not be familiar?

He knew the paths he had taken, which should have led back to the river and the safety of the town.

But it was gone, as if it had never been there in first place.

When the sound of hungry chatter echoed around him, he knew that he had only seconds until they found him again. And so he chose the first tunnel he saw, racing down it as his limbs wadded through the almost ankle-deep water. For a moment, he thought he'd actually found the way out, that his mind had lied to him. . . . But when he saw the bars blocking him, trapping him, the fear began to spread until it had touched every inch of his body.

"Fuck!" he grunted, slamming his fists against the rusting bars.

He couldn't die. He wouldn't die. That. . . that wasn't possible.

The girl's laughter found him again, alerting him that danger was not far off his trail. From the corner of his eye, he could see the tip of a crowbar sticking out, begging him to take it. To defend himself with it to the death, if need be.

It was when he had a tight grip around his weapon that he saw a glossy red balloon floating its way toward him. It stopped before it hit his body, squelching as it turned itself until it revealed the words "I Heart Derry." Mocking him. Tormenting him.

With a thunderous *pop*, the balloon exploded, revealing a tall clown. Blood trickled from his mouth and onto his dirty costume, chin titled, eyes glowing yellow.

For the first time since the birth of his brother, Patrick felt as if the world had begun to cave in around him. It was bigger than fear, of what those zombies had jolted through his system. No. This was unimaginable terror. Terror where you could feel death rumbling towards you at break-neck speed.

Patrick let out a shriek, shaking like a tree being uprooted, as the clown shook his way towards him, roaring through a wide-open maw.

The last that anyone ever heard from Patrick was his screams of agony as he was eaten alive.

So, that was that. The next chapter is written, I just need to finish editing it, so expect to see that soon.

I'd also like to thank everyone who has favorited, followed, and reviewed. I'm always excited when I get a notification and feel so happy that y'all are enjoying this fic. It means a lot.

Until next time, see you later :)

13. Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I do not own *IT*. Stephen King does.

The door to Keen's Pharmacy slammed open as Kimmy raced in, hands tightly gripping its handle. Shifting forward, she managed to straighten herself, feet now still. When she heard the store's elevator music, she managed to take a deep intake of breath before letting it out.

It's okay, she tried to reassure herself. *That thing can't hurt you here.*

Her still trembling body told her otherwise. A slight sting shooting across her hand that she remembered why she had come to the pharmacy in the first place. A headache had begun to form in the back of her head, an unfortunate result of headbutting Victor. With a final, deep inhale and exhale of breath, Kimmy turned and made her way over to the medicine aisle.

Thankfully, it didn't take long to find a bottle of Ibuprofen. Digging into the pocket of her jeans, Kimmy found enough cash to get the medicine she would need and a bottle of soda. But not much else once everything was said and done. . . .

Kimmy frowned at her measly amount of money. She'd been hoping to save it for another comic or a new stash of blank mixtapes. But the throbbing she felt reminded her that she'd be fighting this off for who knew how long if she didn't buy it. Besides, she'd have at least some money left over that she could set aside in a savings jar.

Sighing, she reluctantly made her way towards the back of the store. It was when she rounded the corner that she noticed a girl with gorgeous red hair staring at the shelf before her. There was a lost look on her freckled face as some of her fingers twitching with uncertainty. She looked familiar, as if she had seen her somewhere before. It was when the lighting caught the girl's hair, making it shimmer like a flame, that Kimmy realized why this was so.

"Excuse me," Kimmy said once she stood near the girl.

The red-head jumped back at the sound of the older teen's voice, eyes wide with worry.

"I'm sorry, but, uh, are you Beverly Marsh?"

Her confused stare turned into weariness, bringing her lips in as if preparing for the worst. "I . . . am. How do you know my name?"

"Oh! Sorry. I'm. . . I'm Kimmy. Ben's older sister?"

It took her a moment, but the realization lit throughout her eyes. "The New Kid! I didn't know he had a sister."

"Yeah. That would be me."

The smile of amusement of Beverly's face began to drift away as she finally took in Kimmy's appearance.

"Are you okay?" Beverly asked. "You look like you look pretty hurt."

"Oh?" When she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror hanging above them in the aisle, she repeated, "Oh. . . ."

Her hair was a frizzled mess, a few leaves stuck in some of her brunette strands. There was no saving her clothes, which were stained and torn at the knees from one of her many falls. Even her face, which she had originally thought to be a little dirty, was covered in blood and many scratches. If her aunt didn't end up killing her, her mom most certainly would prevent her from leaving the house ever again. Not to mention how she still looked like she'd seen a fucking ghost. . . . If that ghost happened to be one of the things that had scared the living shit out of her since she was a little kid.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I, uh, just fell, is all."

She looked at the shelves they were in front of, a slight look of discomfort washing over Beverly again. Boxes upon boxes of colorful tampons and sanitary pads loudly stood before them. That's when the realization of what she'd done hit her. That she had butted in during something that she had no business knowing about.

"Oh, my god. I'm so sorry. I. . . I. . . . God, I'm so stupid. I'll, um, I'll

see you around."

Kimmy had hardly taken a step forward when Beverly said, "You're a freshman, right?"

"I was, yeah."

Beverly shifted her weight from one foot to the other, the tips of her fingers pinching bits of her maroon shirt. "Can you help me pick one of these out? I'm. . . I'm not sure which one to choose."

Now Kimmy was the one to feel uncomfortable. Heart rushed to her cheeks as she attempted to figure out how to respond to her question. It wasn't that she was steering away from it the topic because she didn't feel like helping a fellow girl in need out. It was the fact that she, at the age of fifteen, had yet to have her first period. A late bloomer, one whose body didn't quite match the rest of the girls in her year. In fact, she looked more like a middle schooler than she did a high schooler. It felt as if everyone else but her was staring to become a woman. . . leaving her behind and reminding her of yet another thing that made her an outsider.

Kicking the tip of one of her feet across the tile, Kimmy whispered, "Um. . . I haven't really. . . well, you know."

Now Beverly's eyes were wide for a completely different reason. "Wait. Really?"

"It's genetic," she blurted out. "All the women on my mom's side are like that."

"Isn't that unhealthy?"

She shrugged her shoulders, blushing at the idea of sharing something personal. Kimmy would have kept it to herself if Beverly didn't look so clueless. She could have lied, of course, but that didn't feel right. That she didn't need to pretend around her, that she wouldn't go blabbing this to the whole town. Instead, she looked back at the shelves and grabbed a familiar looking box. "I don't know a lot about these, but my mom uses this brand," she said, tentatively holding onto a variety box of Tampex. "I can pay for these, if you'd

like."

"You don't have to."

"It's the least I can do."

Beverly looked at Kimmy as if she had no idea what she was talking about. Kimmy's face softened, a small smile growing as she said, "You were kind to my brother. That. . . that means a lot to me."

For a moment, shock ignited in Beverly's blue eyes, widening at this confession. It wasn't until she said "Thank you" with a smile of appreciation that Kimmy knew that she was okay with this.

Knowing that there was no way she could afford her medication now, Kimmy asked, "Do you like chocolate?"

"Um. . . it's okay. Why?"

"I heard that it helps."

After a moment of thought, Beverly nodded her head.

"Cool." Kimmy held onto the pill bottle, the knuckles of the hand that was gripped around it turning into a pale. Beverly's gaze drifted down to what she held, brows brought down in confusion. Not wanting to get one too many questions, Kimmy started walking down the aisle. "I just need to put something back, and then we can -"

A huff of breath escaped Kimmy when Beverly grabbed hold of her wrist and quickly pulled her away. "Wh -"

She looked over her shoulder in time to see a blonde girl make her way towards where the two other girls had just been. She was busy shifting through her backpack for something, unaware of what was going on before her. Turning back to look at Beverly, she ended up swallowing whatever reply she had planned on saying.

There, standing towards the middle of the aisle, was a small group of boys. Kimmy soon recognized the two that were standing, seeing as she had seen them about an hour prior. It was Bill and Eddie, a couple of Stan's friends. Their wide eyes fit the description of "deer

caught in headlights" perfectly. A roll of bandages tumbled to the floor, drawing Kimmy's attention to Eddie's arms. They were full of supplies, enough to fill two or three first aid kits.

"What?" Kimmy repeated.

Her voice shocked the boy who was looking for something on the bottom shelf. Stan stood behind Bill and Eddie, shocked into the predicament they were in the middle of. The curly haired boy's gaze soon matched his friends' upon seeing them, mouth. A light blush spread across his and Eddie's cheeks, making a point to look anywhere but Kimmy's hand.

It was then that she remembered that she was holding the box of tampons in sight of everyone to see. Her embarrassment led her to hide it behind hers and Beverly's back to save them some discomfort.

A barely audible gasp from Stan caught her attention. She flicked her eyes towards her friend to see the worried look he wore.

"What happened to you?" he asked.

Ah, yeas. What had happened to her? Not much, aside from miraculously making it out alive from back-to-back dangerous encounters.

Not wanting to worry him, nor really get into the details of it all, Kimm flashed him a reassuring smile. "I fell while in the woods. Nothing to worry about."

She mentally slapped herself when Bill asked, "What were y. . . you doing in the woods?"

Kimmy made sure to focus on anything but the boys peering at her as if that would answer their questions. "Oh, you know. Some woods-y stuff. Nothing major or anything. . . ."

Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid.

Wanting to move things along, Beverly asked the boys, "What are you doing here?"

"None of your business," Stan told her.

Unlike his friend, who wasn't willing to share any information, Eddie said, "There's a kid outside. Looked like someone killed him."

A fist gripped itself around Kimmy's heart, pulling it down to the bottom of her feet. Snapping her head in their direction, she unevenly asked, "What's. . . what's his name?"

"*Shit*," Eddie said under his breath, not looking her in the eyes.

But the way Stan looked at her apologetically, was enough of an answer.

Oh, my god. Benny.

She dropped the things she had in her hold and swiftly made her way towards the exit, beginning her search for Ben.

"Ben?! Ben?! Where are you?" Kimmy called out, beginning to frantically make her way down the sidewalk.

She hadn't seen him outside of the store, nor anywhere on her right. He had to be somewhere nearby. Eddie had told her so. And unless Bowers had found him again. . . .

As a wave of nausea rippled in her stomach, someone called out with a poorly done Spanish accent, "Over here, Señorita!"

Within an alleyway, Kimmy saw a boy waving at her, a beaming smile on his face once their eyes locked with each other. It was Richie, the missing member of the friend group. Shifting her focus towards the boy sitting against the wall, a gasp of worry and relief left her. She sprinted towards them, ignoring the aches that were throbbing throughout her body.

"Shit, did Bowers fuck you up, too?" Richie asked the moment she came to a stop, bending over to catch her breath.

"Hardly," Kimmy huffed, no longer in the mood to deny that she was fine and dandy.

As Richie gawked at her dismissive response, she knelt down in front of Ben. Tears began to prickle in her eyes at the sight of him. He looked even worse than her. Twigs were stuck in his hair and a spot on his T-shirt looked like the remains of a spilt chocolate milkshake. Kimmy wanted nothing more than to crush him in a hug, but held back in fear of making his cut even worse than it already was. Instead, she grabbed on to one of his hands.

"Fuck, Ben," she said, knowing better than to ask how he was.

If she was far from being okay, she couldn't imagine how bad he felt.

"Ditto," he said in return, having noticed how shaken up and injured she was. "How'd you get away?"

"I, uh, may or may not have head-butted Victor?"

A chortle interrupted them, causing them to look at Richie with slight annoyance.

"You head-butted Victor? *Victor* as in *Victor* Victor?" asked Richie, having managed to regain some control over himself.

"Um. . . . Yes?"

This only seemed to further send him reeling. Richie had bent over, arms wrapped around his waist, as he continued to laugh. "That's. . . badass, dude!"

Ben and Kimmy shared a look, one that silently asked the other how they should respond to this. Soon enough, a small chuckle left Kimmy as she remembered Victor's reaction (well, from what she heard, at least).

"Yeah. I guess it was."

The sound of squawking and feet hitting pavement came racing down the alleyway. Rushing towards them, was Bill, Eddie, and Stan. Some of the supplies Eddie held fell out of his arms, which Bill or Stan would pick up as they attempted to keep up with him. Finally, they stood before them, panting from nerves and excitement.

Wasting no time, Eddie told Kimmy to move, which she clumsily did, standing far enough to give him space. After inspecting Ben's wound, Eddie began the process of taking care of it. She bit her lip as she watched the small boy begin to grab the things he needed with ease.

"Whoa," she remarked as she pulled the sleeves of her shirt over her palms. "You seem to know your stuff, Eddie."

Eddie's chest puffed at her comment, pride covering every inch of his small frame. But before he could respond, Richie said, "He's a hypochondriac, so it's kind of his job to know how to fix owies and boo-boos."

"Why the fuck would you say that?"

"'Cause it's true!"

"You know what else is true? You sound like a baby when you say 'owies' and 'boo-boos.'"

"Oh, yeah?"

"That's what I just said, so 'yeah!'"

Stan rolled his eyes as the two bantered, as if this wasn't the first nor the last time that the two of them would get into it. Ben remained silent through it all, shifting awkwardly as he tried to figure out if it was best to stay quiet or not. Kimmy watched everything unfold around her with amusement.

The sound of someone giggling got everyone to shut-up and look at her. It wasn't too long after that she realized that they were coming from her.

"I'm. . . I'm sorry. It's just that. . . Oh, my god!" She shoved her face into her hands, the events and emotions she'd felt finally catching up to her. She hissed in discomfort when her head reminded her that she needed to begin taming it, lest she stay up all night.

"Jesus. Did you knock something loose when you head-butted Victor?"

That got her to abruptly stop giggling.

"I'm sorry, she did what now?" asked Eddie.

"Head-butted Vic," Richie repeated. "You know, like, in the face?"

"I know what a head-butt is!"

The two soon resumed their bickering, forgetting the topic that Richie had brought up. A light, uncertain tap on her shoulder drew Kimmy's face out of her hands and looking up at an awaiting Stan. He was holding something, though she was oblivious to how it was slightly shaking. It was a bottle of Ibuprofen, probably the one she had unknowingly dropped on her way out.

"You, uh, forgot this," Stan quietly told her, eyes focused on his shoes.

She looked between the bottle and her friend, a warm feeling spreading through her. "Stanley Uris," she began with a smile. "Did you steal drugs for me?"

Stan took a sharp inhale of breath at this remark. "Well. . . yes," he finally managed to sputter out, cheeks tinted a light pink.

Saving him, Kimmy gingerly took the bottle from him, her smile growing bigger. She didn't think anyone would care to notice that she'd gotten something from the pharmacy - she hadn't.

"Thank you, Stan. Really."

She tore off the wrapping and hurriedly unscrewed the top, popping two of the red pills into her mouth. Kimmy pinched her nose between her fingers, swallowing them dry. Knowing that some of the pain would soon begin to fade, a little bit of the tension began to leave her shoulders.

"No problem," he said, a tiny smile of his own making an appearance.

It was then that he noticed the scrapes on her hand, how they still were far from being clean and unbandaged. Stan quietly cleared his throat, just loud enough for Kimmy to hear.

"Is it alright if I . . ." he began to ask, pointing at what he was referring to.

Catching on, Kimmy nodded her head, trustingly holding them out for him to look at. He knelt down beside her, carefully taking them in one his own. The warmth of his skin against hers felt nice, reassuring. A sigh left her, beginning to feel to shit she'd faced begin to drift to the back of her mind. She missed the way his blush had begun to spread to his ears at the contact they made. Instead, she mistook the way he pointedly looked at her injuries was just him inspecting them.

Having gotten an idea on what they needed, he grabbed some Band Aides and a couple of antiseptic wipes. Kimmy watched him as he began to clean her scrapes. He looked so focus, as if what he was doing was super important. Some of his curls softly swung with each movement he made, adding to the seriousness of it all.

She must have begun to hum at some point, because Stan spared her a quick glance.

"Is that your favorite song?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"The one that you're humming?"

"Which. . . one is that?"

""Take On Me.""

Oh!

"Yeah. . . it is."

A moment of silence hung between them as they fell back into the rhythm they were in.

"You do this often?" she finally managed to ask.

"Clean up my friends messes? Not as often as you would think."

"Ha, ha. Very funny, Stan."

He shrugged his shoulders. "What can I say? I'm a funny guy," he said as he placed a bandage over the remaining scrape on her palm.

His fingers lingered over it, as if unsure what to do next. For a moment, Kimmy though he'd gotten stuck in his thoughts until he shifted his brown gaze to Kimmy's hazel one. "Does that help?"

"Tons," Kimmy said, nodding her head and placing a hand on top of his forearm. "Thanks for helping me."

"You're welcome."

Richie watched this unfold from the moment he noticed Stan take some of Eddie's supplies. Eddie, of course, wasn't happy that the stuff he needed had been taken until Richie shushed him. The four other boys looked on as a love-struck Stan the Man helped the girl he was head-over-heels for. They had been talking quietly enough so that anyone who wasn't them needed to focus. But he was pretty sure that his best friend was close to imploding on the spot at the mere contact he had with her.

It was. . . cute, he supposed, watching his quiet and responsible friend interreact with Kimmy. They had a relaxing aura about them. It was like everything about their friendship was simple, easy. A rhythm that couldn't easily be disrupted.

Eddie didn't watch them for long, insisting that he needed to get back to Ben's wounds. Something about the faster they took care of it the better it would heal.

Whatever it was, he was much more interested in what was unfolding off to the side. Even if Eddie kept snipping at him to hand him things.

Bossy, bossy.

It was a good thing he liked him, otherwise he would have called it a day and left him to his own devices.

"Oh, god! He's bleeding! Oh, my god!" Stan exclaimed, gaze wide in panic, as they watched fresh blood begin to trickle out of his wound.

"Is it suppose to do that?" asked Kimmy, eyeing Ben's wound worriedly.

Eddie, eyebrows brought down in concentration, didn't look away from Ben's wound as he said, "Shh! You guys need to stop talking."

"You have to suck the wound before you apply the Band-Aids," remarked Richie in frustration. "This is 101."

"You don't know what you're talking about."

"Are you okay?" asked a familiar voice, jolting the four of them away from the task at hand. Beverly kept his focus on Ben, concerned about what Bowers had done to him. "That looks like it hurts."

Ben brought down the section of his shirt that he had been holding, hurriedly smoothing it out. "Oh, no. I'm good," he told her, attempting to sound cool and like what had happened to him wasn't that big of a deal. "I just fell."

Richie scoffed at this. "Yeah. Right into Henry Bowers."

"S. . . shut it, Richie," Bill warned, who stood beside the red-head who'd helped them get their supplies.

"Why? It's the truth." He glanced at an uneasy Kimmy, whose lip was close to gushing a rive of blood. "Right, Kimmy?"

"Richie!" Stan protested, glaring the glasses-wearing boy,

He looked back at Stan, befuddled, failing to notice how the siblings shifted in their seats.

Of course telling him even the slightest about what had happened would come back to bite her in the butt. . . . Then again, who was she trying to fool? They seemed to have already suspected that something was up the moment they saw her in the store.

"You sure they got the right stuff to fix you up?" asked Beverly, the corner of her lips pointed upwards as she sent Ben a tiny wink.

That seemed to cheer her brother right up for he let out a soft

chuckle with a semblance of a smile. The rest of the group had caught on that there was something else behind those words, though they had no clue what.

"You know, w. . . we'll take care of him," promised Bill, regaining everyone's focus. "Uh, thanks again, Beverly."

This dismissive tone, though not out-right rude, caused Beverly's face to fall. "Sure. Maybe I'll see you around?"

Realizing his mistake, Bill added on, "Yeah, w. . . we were thinking about g. . . going to the quarry, tomorrow if you wanna. . . if you wanna come." As if remembering that Beverly had yet to befriend the rest of the Losers, he turned to Kimmy and Ben. "You g. . . guys could come, too, if you'd like."

Though she hardly knew Bill, there were two things Kimmy had picked up on. He was the leader and he had an air about him that made it seem like everything were his idea all along. Definitely a charmer, that one, full of charisma and a sense of control.

"Sure. Sounds fun," said Kimmy, looking at her brother who nodded his head after a moment of thought.

"Good to know," was Beverly's reply. "Thanks."

With a wave good-bye, the red-headed teen let them be. Suddenly, Kimmy remembered what she'd promised to do.

"Beverly! Wait!" she called out, getting back on her feet and making her way after her.

Towards the end of the alley, Beverly stopped and waited for Kimmy to catch up, waiting for her to say something.

"I, um, I never paid for -"

"It's alright. We're good."

"I - "

"You helped me figure things out. That's more than enough," she said,

sending her another one of her corner-lip grins. "See you soon? When no ones bleeding or needs to steal shit?"

"Wouldn't that be nice," Kimmy laughed, the other girl joining her for a second.

With a final nod, Beverly turned and continued on to where she'd been heading before Kimmy stopped her. "See ya," she said over her shoulder.

"Yeah," Kimmy said, happy to have finally met the girl her brother adored. "See ya."

Stan wasted no time in berating Richie the moment both Beverly and Kimmy were out of ear-shot. "Nice going bringing up Bowers in front of her."

"Yeah, dude," agreed Eddie. "You heard what she did."

"What she do?" Ben softly asked, peering up at Eddie - brows brought together as he wondered what he had referred to.

Richie wore a shit-eating grin at Ben's question.

Here we go.

"More like 'who'd she do.' From what I hear, the list is longer than my wang," Richie said, teasingly placing one of his hands over his groin.

"That's not saying much," Stan remarked, smiling when his friend sent daggers his way.

Honestly, if he wanted people to laugh, he should come up with stuff that was actually funny.

"They're just r. . . rumors," interrupted Bill, defending Beverly when she herself couldn't do so herself.

"And what are those?"

All five boys startled at this, having been too invested in their

conversation. Stan felt guilt begin to gnaw at his stomach the moment his eyes landed on Kimmy, shifting her gaze between them.

God, he loved her eyes. They were more on the brown side with green and amber undertones spattered around them. Like autumn leaves, crisp and vibrant. Ready to fall but not quite ready to let go of the branches they were still attached to.

"Christ, do you have to sneak up on us?" demanded Richie, hand placed over his heart.

"I wasn't sneaking," Kimmy defended. "*You* just weren't paying attention."

Stan couldn't help but sinker at this, especially with the stunned look Richie sent Kimmy's way. As if he hadn't expected her to throw something back at him. And then he grinned, dark eyes sparkling with mirth.

"*Ah-ha!* Just as I suspected! You're an eavesdropper!"

She playful narrowed her eyes at him, returning an equally mischievous smile of her own. "*And you're a little turd.*"

Richie's face fell dramatically. He placed the back of his hand against his forehead, pretending like he was on the verge of fainting. "Alas, you have discovered my true form."

Though Richie was annoying, there were moments where he drew out a positive response to his jokes. While most of them shook their heads in amusement, Eddie sent their friend a glare to knock-it off. It was because of this that Richie was able to gloss over the question Kimmy had asked them.

"Anyway," continued Richie, looking at a squinting Ben, "Bill had her back in third grade. They kissed in the school play. The reviews said you can't fake that sort of passion."

It was true. Out of all their classmates, Bill and Beverly use to have the best chemistry. They had once been drawn to each other. Always sitting close to each other, hands inches away from touching as they waited for their cues. You could almost feel the electricity radiate off

of their lips when they shyly kissed. It wasn't as memorable of a play, seeing as no one could really remember the name of it off of the top of their heads. That kiss, though, was something that stuck with the friends long after their final bows.

From the corner of his eye, he noticed how Kimmy wore a tiny frown of worry that was directed at Ben. The latter had his gaze glued to the pavement, a forlorn look etched into his face.

With a clap of his hands, Richie exclaimed, "Now, pip-pip and tally-ho, my good fellows and lady. I do believe this chap requires are utmost attention. Get in there, Dr. K. Come on, fix him up!"

Eddie, who had been patted on the shoulder by Richie, bent back in front of Ben to pick up where he had left off. "Why don't you shut the fuck up, Eisenstein, because I know what the fuck I'm doing," he said in one breath. "And I don't want you to do the British guy with me right now," he finished. Trying his absolute hardest not to look at the smirk Richie wore whenever he had found a way beneath his skin.

"*That* was a British accent?" interrupted Kimmy, nose slightly crinkled.

"What the hell did you think it was?"

"I don't know? An auctioneer?"

That got a round of light laughter from everyone, aside from Riche who looked as if he had been stabbed in the heart.

"You wound me, M'lady," he said in a much more pronounced British accent.

"Wow," Eddie said dryly, never taking his eyes off of Ben as he steadily cleaned another section of his wound. "Someone's finally gotten through to you."

Shaking his head, Richie gestured his hand towards Ben's injury and said, "Suck the wound. Get in there."

"Like a leech?" asked Kimmy.

"*Exactly* like a leech!" he excitedly exclaimed.

"Will you two stop talking?" Eddie barked. "You're making it hard for me to focus."

While Kimmy breathed out a laugh, Riche decided to ignore this. He decided to instead explain why this was such a great idea, that this was what was done in the "olden days." Stan looked down at Kimmy as she smiled as the two began to banter, once again. Unaware of the starry-eyed boy who thought she was the coolest girl he'd ever met.

She almost caught him when she sent him an amused look, as if saying "your friends are pretty great." Stan felt his stomach begin to flutter, nodding his head in agreement.

But you're even greater.

This was such a fun chapter to write. I'm so happy that Kimmy and Richie are, like, officially interacting with each other. It was one of the things I was most looking forward to. And, oh, my god. Stan is too precious for this world. I could go on and on about what I liked most about this chapter, but that would take an entire chapter's worth of time, lol.

The next chapter won't be done as quick as this one was, so I have no idea when I'll upload the next one. I'm also going to work more on my *Swamp Thing* and *Stranger Things* fics, so that'll likely keep me away from this fic for a bit.

Until next time, see you later :)